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# *Lucknow*

## *THEN AND NOW*



edited by Rosie Llewellyn-Jones  
with photographs by Ravi Kapoor

## Lucknow: Then and Now

Although many people believe that Lucknow's finest period was during the time of the nawabs, its history did not begin in 1775 when the court of Awadh returned to Lucknow permanently, any more than it finished in 1856 when the last nawab Wajid Ali Shah travelled into exile and Lucknow presented the picture of a looted city. Pre-nawabi Lucknow was a flourishing city that lay mainly to the south of the Gomti with several Mughal structures along the river. Under the nawabs the city became synonymous with extravagance, the creative arts and patronage of artists, and extraordinary buildings. It went on to become a battleground between the East India Company and opponents of British rule. After 1858, the British reorganized Lucknow and some of the finest architects were commissioned to build here. The city became known for its fine educational institutions. Today, once again it is a city in transition, with a move away from the old city into the new suburbs.

The last twenty years have seen an enormous amount of research and writing about the many-faceted city which has something for everyone – the historian, the artist, the photographer, the social anthropologist. The present volume focuses on less well-known aspects of Lucknow life and history – the present-day attractions of this city in transition, the bazaars with delectable foods to tempt the palate, the craftspeople who even today create delicate works of art; the architecture, from imambaras and karbalas to Victorian, Edwardian, and Modernist structures, and educational institutions including the legacy of Claude Martin; and the charm of 18th- and 19th-century Faizabad and Lucknow preserved in paintings and photographs. Thus, in three sections – The Living City, Secular and Religious Institutions, and The Visual Arts – the chapters present a lively range of subjects, some of which will be enlightening even for those who live in Lucknow.

### Cover

Antoine-Louis Poller enjoying a nautch at his house in Lucknow. By a Lucknow artist, circa 1785, after a lost painting by Johann Zoffany. 29 x 30.5 cm. Private collection. Photograph courtesy British Library, London.

### Endpapers

Chikan work from the collection of Runa Banerjee, SEWA, Lucknow.

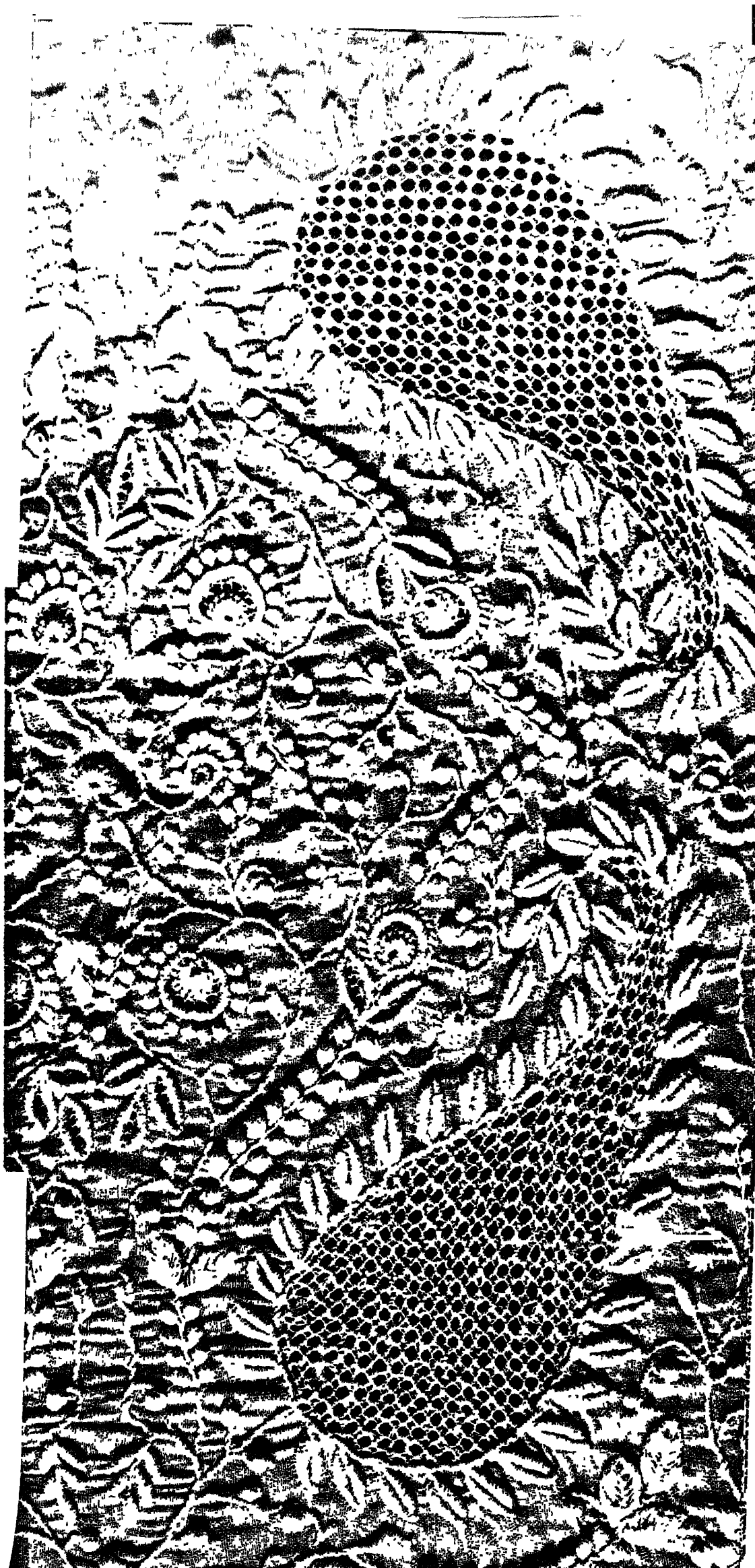
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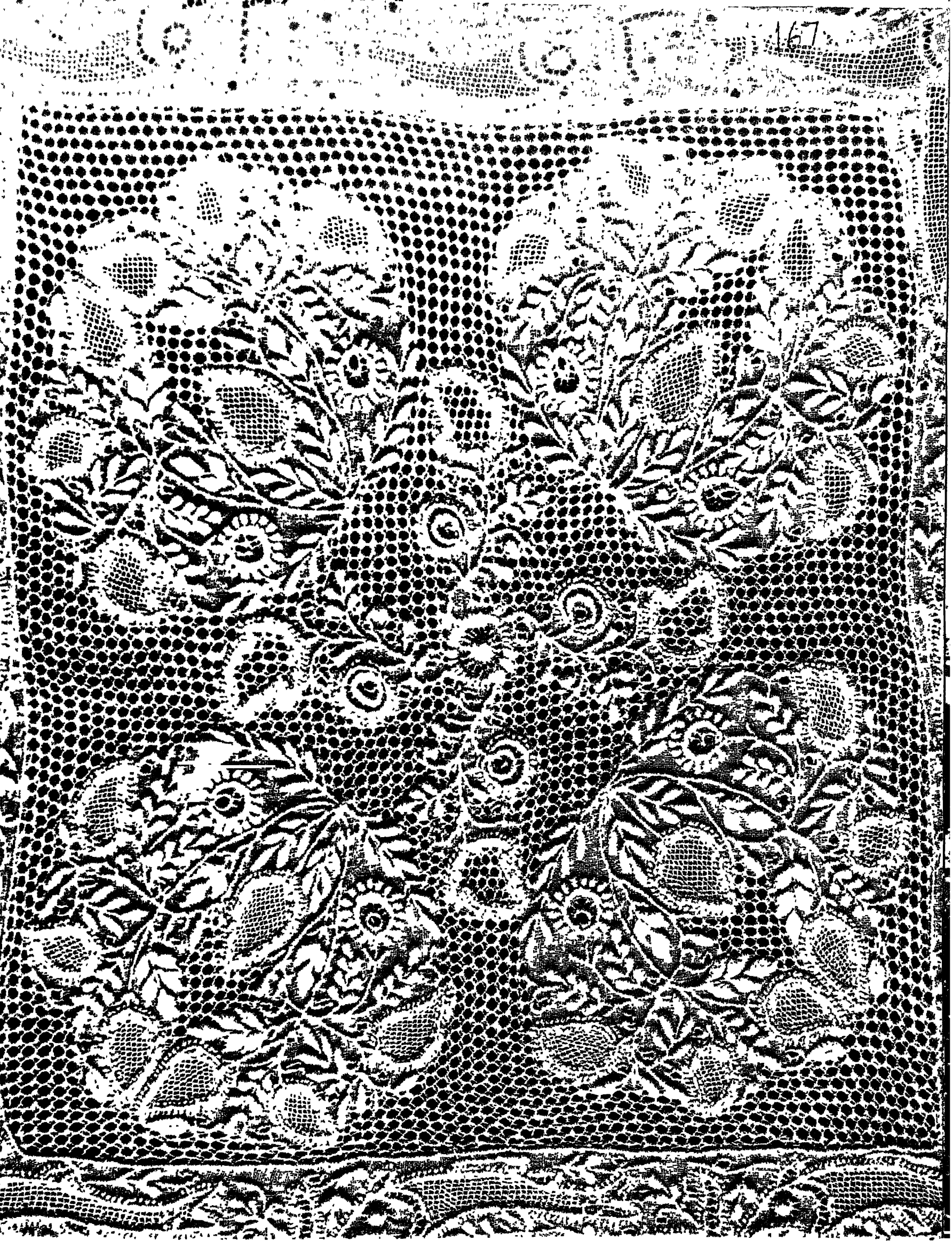
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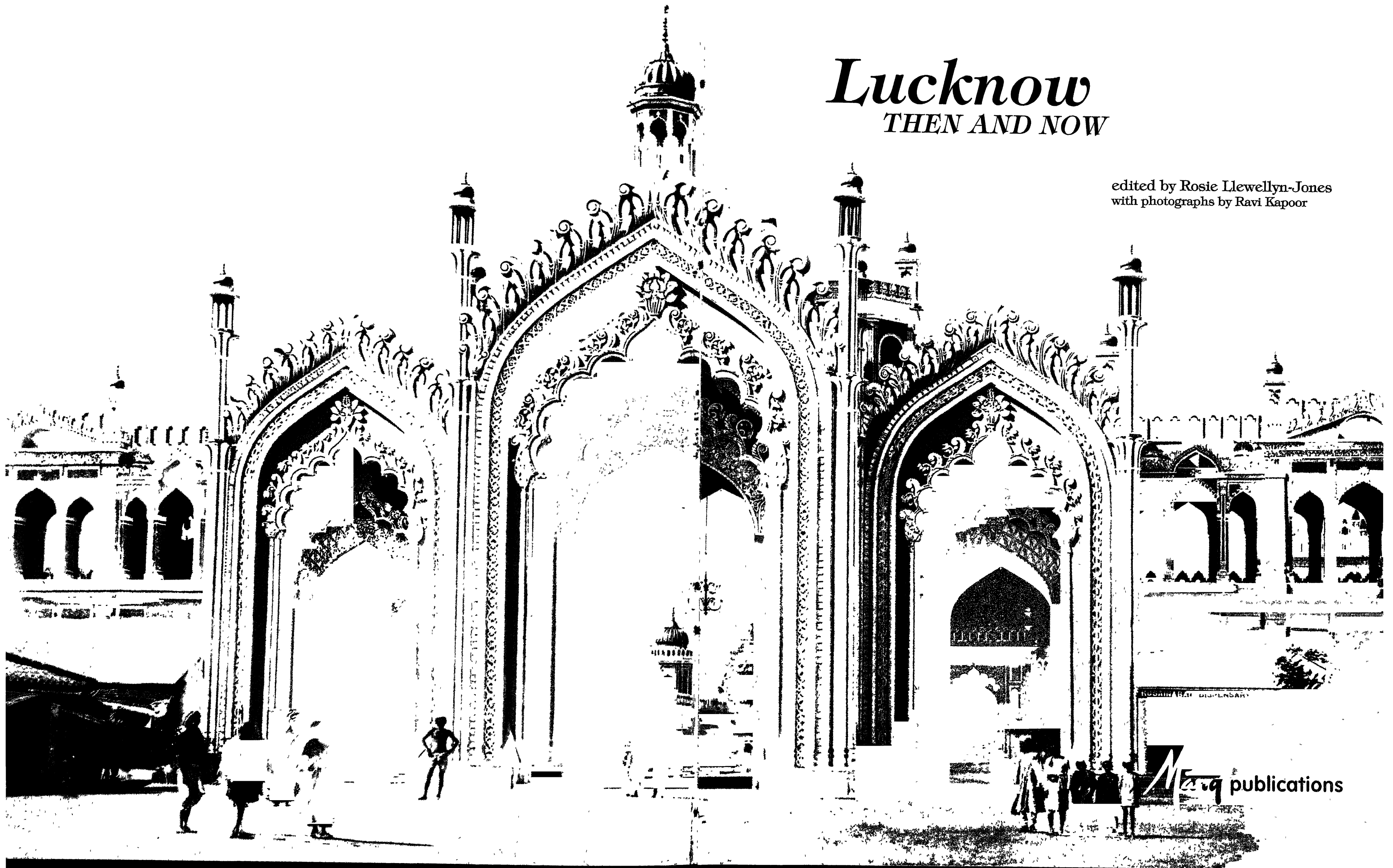
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*Preliminary pages*

*Page 1* Kathak exponent Aparna Sharma, trained in the Lucknow Gharana

*Pages 2-3* "The Gate of Hoosainabad Lucknow", by Samuel Bourne Courtesy Osian's Library & Archive, Documentation & Research Centre

*Page 4* Jafar Mir Abdullah, whose family is descended from Muhammad Ali Shah, the 3rd king of Awadh

*Page 5* Decorative calligraphy and stucco work on the entrance to the Hussainabad Imambara Photograph Lt-Col Anil Mehrotra

*Pages 6-7* Aerial view of Lucknow from Jama Masjid showing the Hussainabad Chota Imambara complex, Clock Tower, Tilewali Masjid, and Rumi Darwaza

*Pages 8-9, and section dividers* Watercolour views of Lucknow, and collages of Lucknow by Durga Datt Pandey, an artist trained at the Lucknow School of Arts and Crafts

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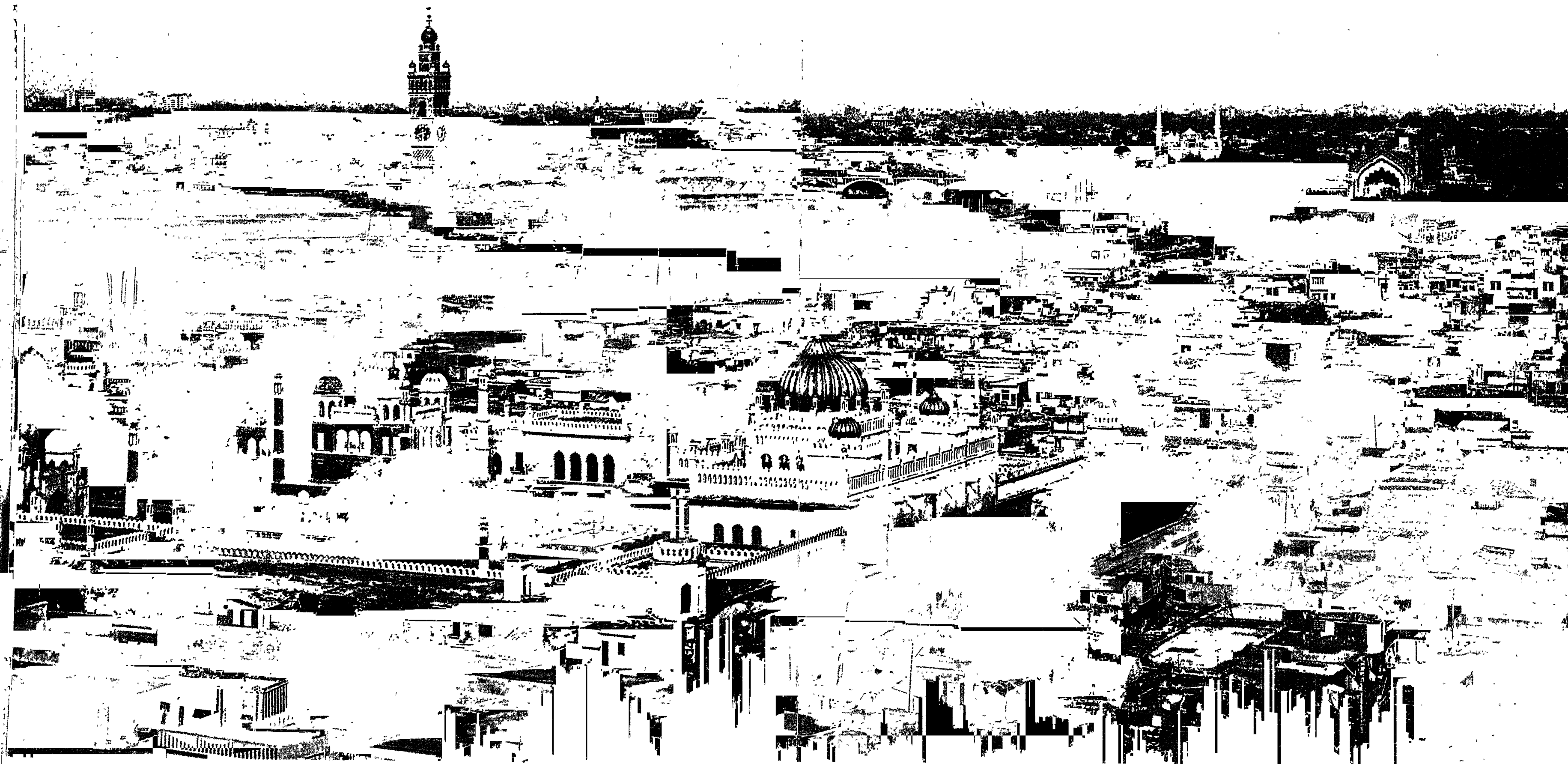
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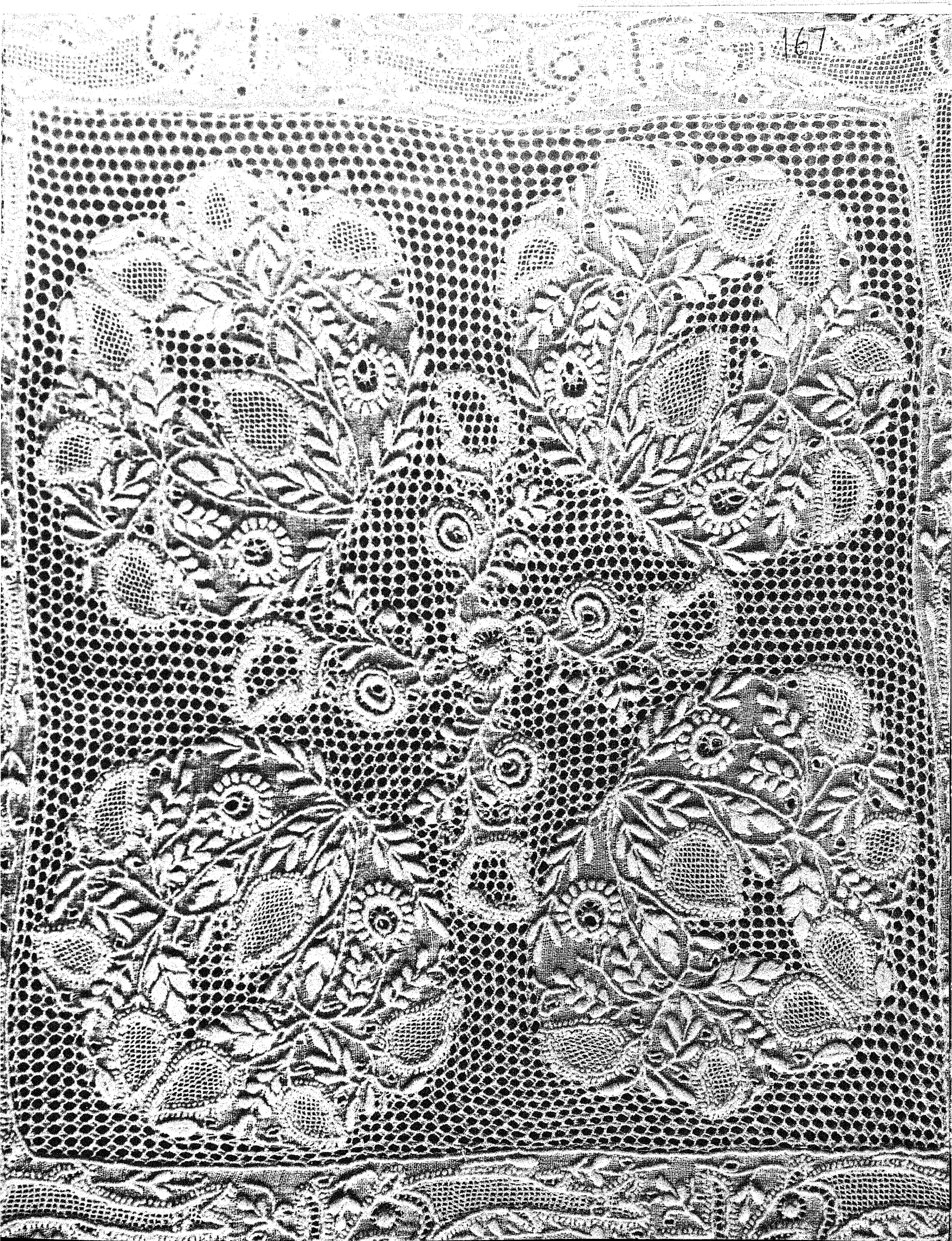


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### The Nawabi City

We need to travel back ourselves, through that century to trace the emergence of Lucknow as the richest city of late 18th-century India, and, after the fall of Delhi in 1803 to the British, the intellectual and cultural heir to the Mughals. The nawabi dynasty had, like the Mughal dynasty, its origins outside India. The nawabs came from Naishapur, in eastern Persia, and were employed at the Mughal court in the early 18th century. Appointed as subahdars (governors) of Awadh by the Emperor, they soon became hereditary rulers in the province. At first they established their headquarters at Lucknow, in the Macchi Bhawan palace, but then moved to Faizabad, 120 kilometres distant, in the 1760s. To find the origins of the high culture of Lucknow, and some of the men and women who contributed to it, we need to look at the Faizabad court too, which is examined by Lucian Harris in this volume. The court and the majority of government departments returned to Lucknow permanently in 1775 with the accession of the fourth nawab, Asaf-ud-daula.

The years between 1775 and 1856, when Awadh was annexed by the East India Company, and its ruler travelled into exile, were the most brilliant period in the history of Lucknow. In the space of eighty years, less than a man's lifetime, the city became synonymous with luxury, extravagance, the creative arts, the patronage of artists, and extraordinary buildings and architectural follies. No wonder it has been described as "the last example of an Oriental capital in India" for its rulers carried Mughal values into the Victorian age. It was anachronistic, almost from the start, but it was glorious.

A new town sprang up along the southern bank of the Gomti, at right angles to the existing Chowk. Within the reign of Asaf-ud-daula (1775–97) the Bara Imambara was completed, the old Macchi Bhawan palace fort extensively altered,

and a new palace complex, the Daulat Khana, established in the area where the Hussainabad Clock Tower stands today. Each nawab added something new, or something inspired by an existing building. Interestingly, just as secular buildings were copied from European models, so religious buildings including the Kazmain, the Shah Najaf, and the Rumi Darwaza were based on shrines in the Muslim world (see Neeta Das in this volume). The imambaras and barahdaris came from the nawabs' original home in Persia. Throughout the whole of this period, interference by Company officials, particularly the British Resident at the Lucknow court, was apparent. The nawabs' domestic arrangements were queried, their armies reduced, their lands taken away by threat, even their line of succession broken at times. It was a different kind of looting, stealing away the autonomy of a supposedly independent state (later a kingdom), and undermining the authority of its rulers, but it was just as damaging.

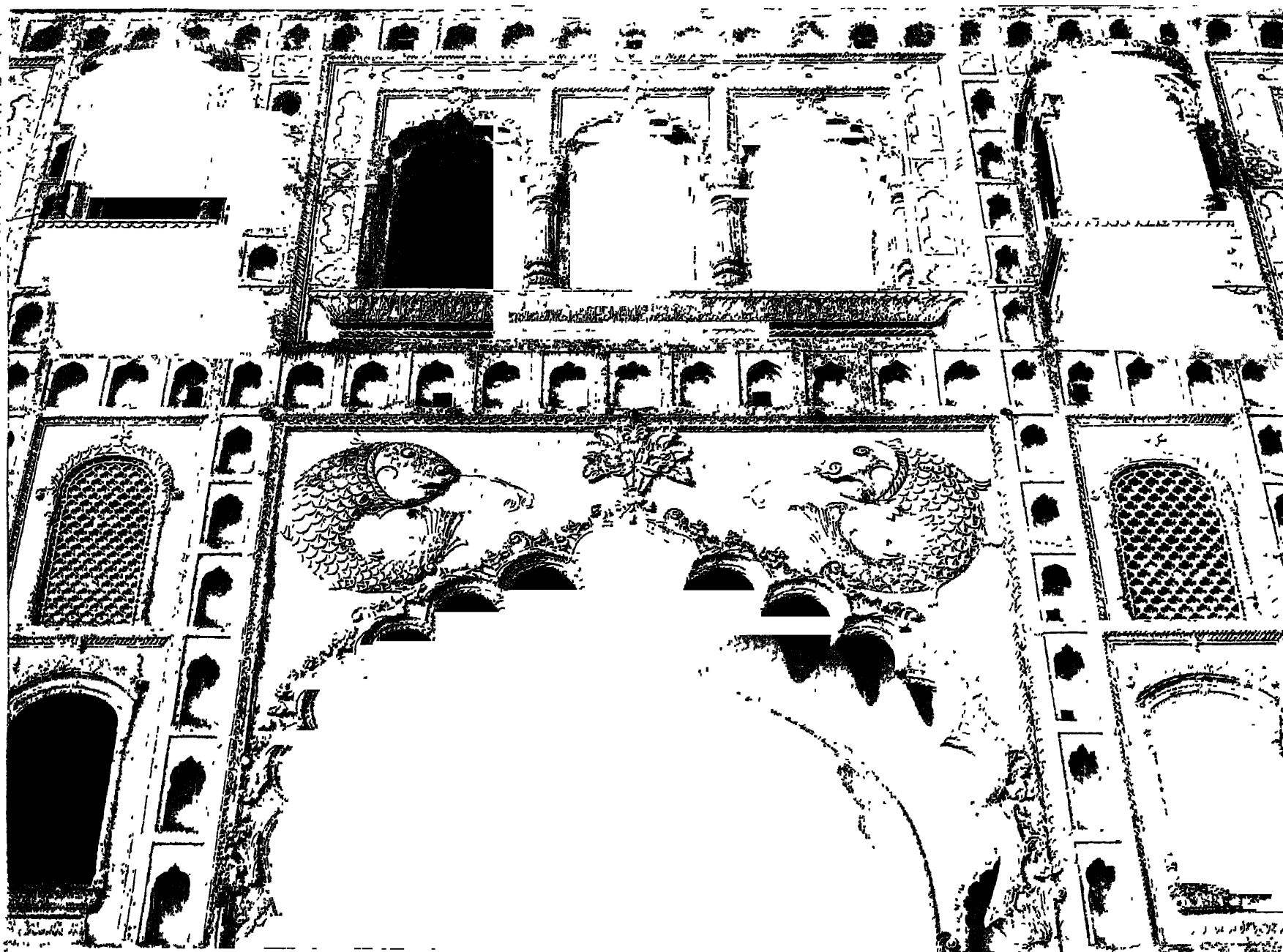
Annexation of Awadh in 1856 by the Company was one of the chief causes of the uprising the following year. With the recapture of Lucknow, the Company revenged itself on the city. Apart from the deliberate trashing of the Qaisarbagh palace, because it had been the headquarters of the opposition, huge areas of houses and gardens were destroyed over the next twenty years. Many of the old medieval residential areas or mohallas, that pre-dated the arrival of the nawabs, were demolished to make space for broad military roads that cut through the middle of the old city. Important religious structures were taken over by Company soldiers, who stored cannon and ammunition in the Bara Imambara. A mesh of palace outbuildings around the Chattar Manzil complex was demolished, leaving the original palace buildings standing denuded of the intricate entrances, pavilions, and gardens that had given them a real sense of

#### 2 *opposite*

The last nawab of Awadh, Wajid Ali Shah (r. 1847–56). Oil portrait, circa 1880. Hussainabad Picture Gallery, Lucknow.







3  
Gateway at the Bara Imambara. Note the curled fish in the spandrels, the symbol of the nawabs.

importance and dignity. The Qaisarbagh and Sikanderbagh palaces were emasculated by main roads cut through the fairy-like buildings and fantasy garden follies, ruining the architectural axes.

Photographs taken in the immediate aftermath of recapture show the extent of the devastation, streets where every building is damaged, piles of rubble and defensive earthworks, trees stripped of their branches, boats sunk at their moorings in the river. It seems extraordinary that anything could have survived the bombardment or the subsequent demolitions. And yet there is still enough left to cherish here. Some of the buildings were repaired, including the Chattar Manzil palaces. Others, which had survived the fighting, like the

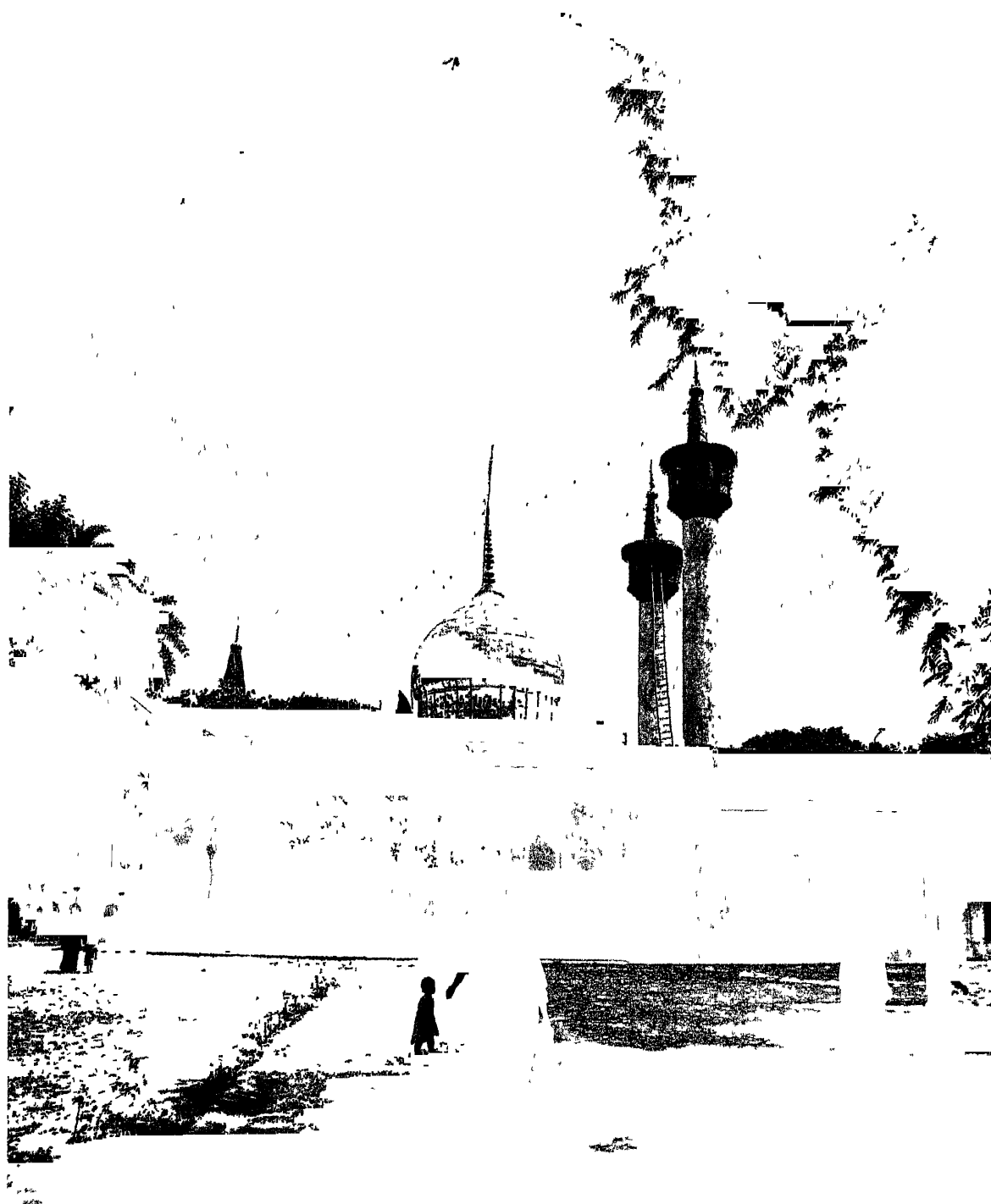
Dilkusha and the Musa Bagh, were in ruins by the 1870s.

Although an incalculable amount of treasure in the form of jewels, armour, paintings, robes, books, manuscripts, court records, and furniture was looted, a few things have subsequently surfaced, sometimes in unexpected places.<sup>2</sup> Paintings in particular are a valuable source of information, and this volume places great emphasis on the Lucknow School of painting, as it is known (see J.P. Losty in this volume). There are other curious survivals too. Here, Mukul Mangalik traces the journey of nawabi cuisine out of the palaces and into the streets and humble eateries of the city today. Sudipta Dev shows that some of the crafts associated with the old days of royal patronage have survived and

adapted to today's trends. Interestingly, the Gulf kingdoms now provide a market for some of the finest embroideries from Lucknow, which are appropriately known as shahi kaam, or royal work.

Although many people believe that Lucknow's finest and most interesting period was during the time of the nawabs, its history did not begin in 1775 anymore than it finished in 1856. The

nawabs did not create their capital from scratch. Medieval Lucknow was a flourishing city, that lay mainly to the south of the Gomti river and which was dignified by a number of buildings erected through the patronage of the Mughal emperors. It attracted religious pilgrims (as it does today), and manufactured a range of exportable goods (again, as now). My preliminary chapter looks at the pre-nawabi city.



4  
Karbala Dayanat-ud-Daulah of Imam Hussain, the third imam. This replica tomb is based on that at Karbala in Iraq.

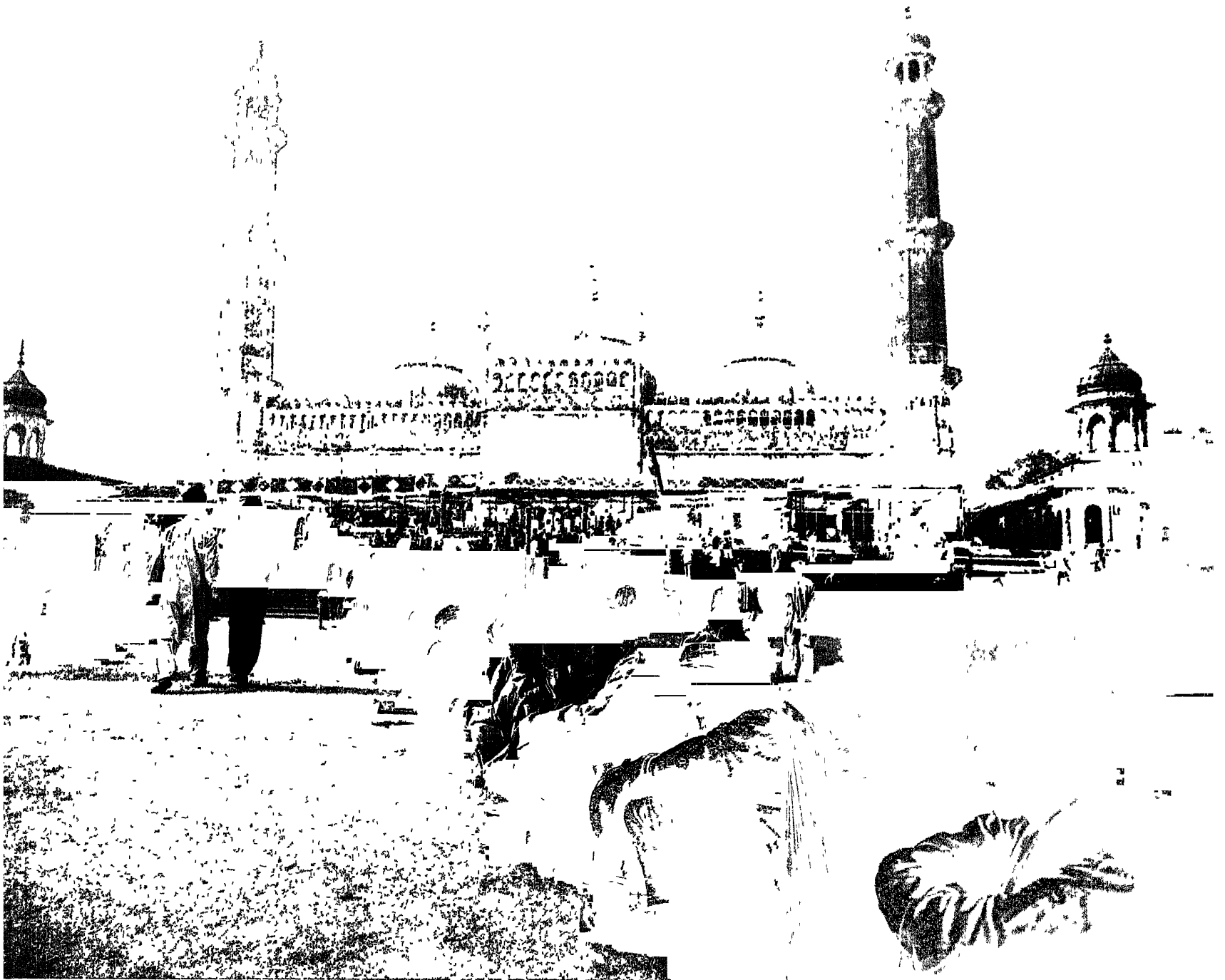
### The City after 1858

British administrators reorganized post-nawabi Lucknow to suit their needs, and more importantly, those of its inhabitants. The large grounds of the Dilkusha, formerly a royal hunting park, were laid out for the new military cantonments, the old site at Mariaon having been destroyed in 1857. Churches were needed too, to replace those sacked in the uprising.<sup>3</sup> As Christopher London's chapter shows, an important programme of municipal building was carried out, sometimes funded by wealthy landowners like the Balrampur family.

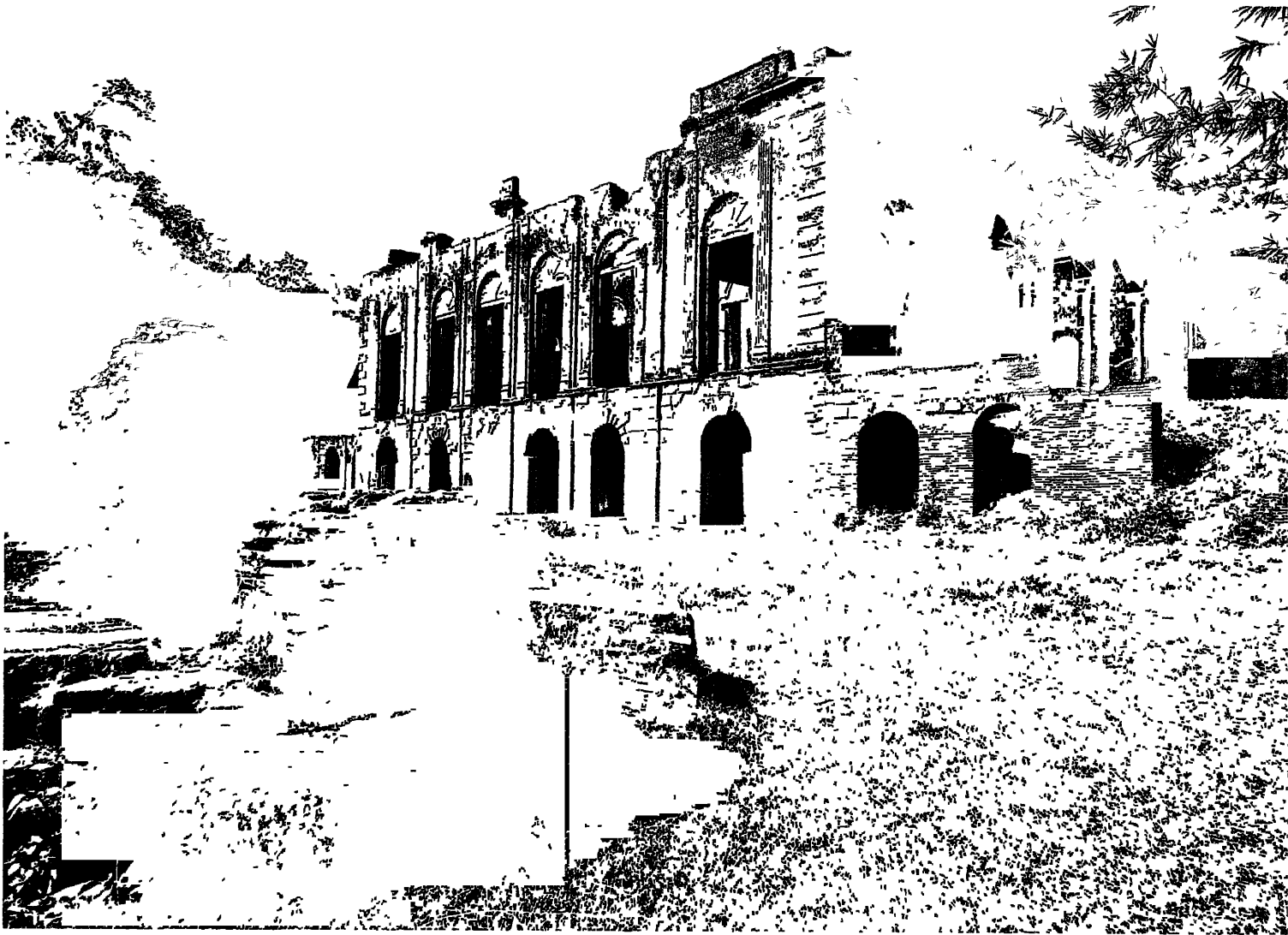
The city was never to be isolated again, cut off from military help if more disturbances arose. Railway lines were laid down, the old nawabi garden of Charbagh, with its great folding doors, gave its name to the main station. Lucknow was certainly not short-changed by its post-1858 architects. Some of the best men working at the time were commissioned to build here, and another brilliant architect, Walter Burley Griffin, introduced the art-deco style to the city in the 1930s, most successfully in the Pioneer Press building, which was sadly demolished in the early 1980s.

5

Pilgrims and alms-seekers outside the Asafi Masjid at Id







A number of schools existed in nawabi days, including madrassas for Muslim boys, a dame school run by an Englishwoman in the Residency complex, and La Martiniere, established as a boys' school with money willed by Major General Claude Martin. Ian Shepherd shows how new schools developed and grew rapidly in the later 19th century, often started by determined women with a handful of pupils. Lucknow University, established in 1920, brought together three separate colleges, and the main campus building was designed by Sir Swinton Jacob. The proposed library, designed in 1935/36 by Walter Burley Griffin was only partially realized.

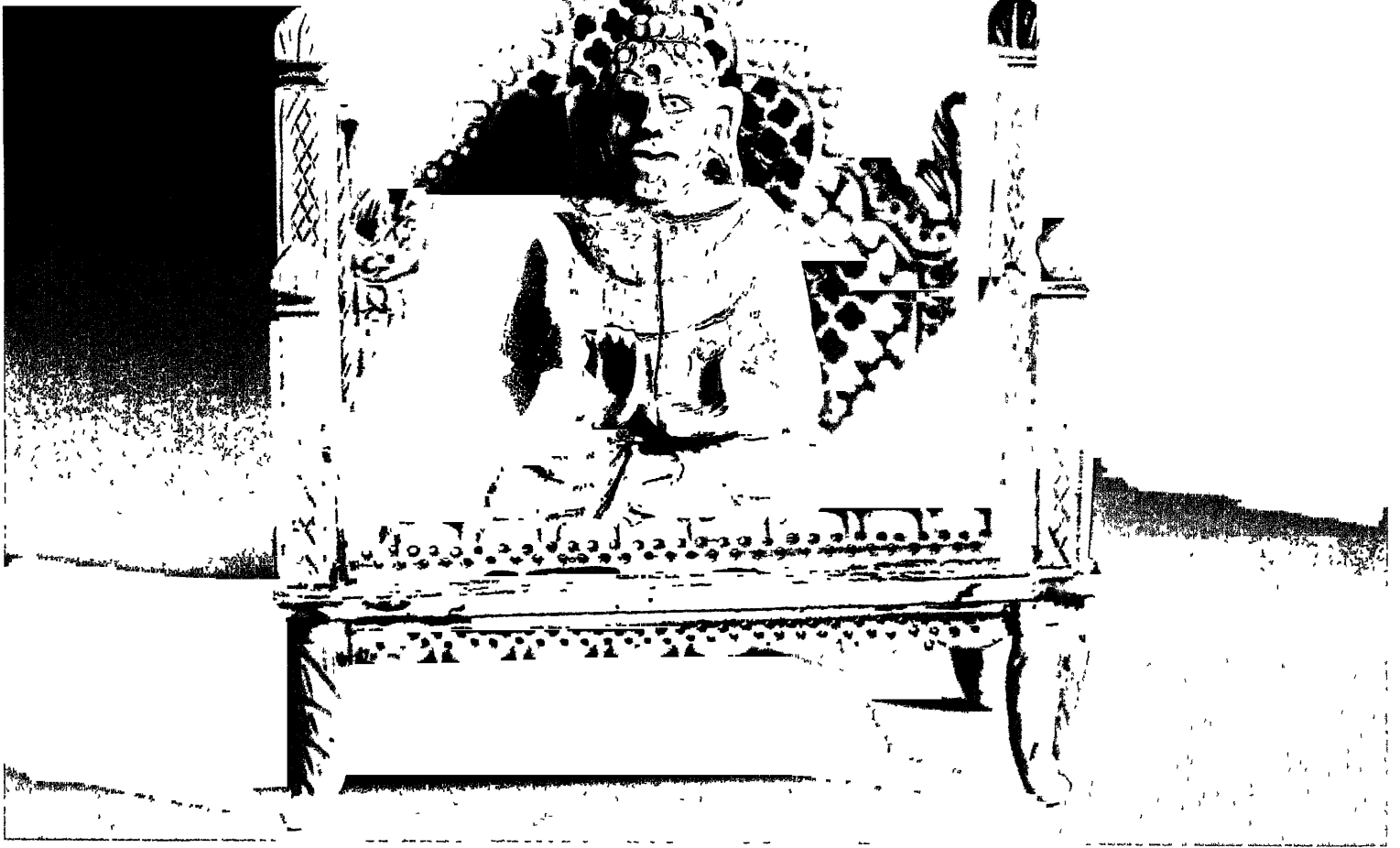
### The Rediscovery of Lucknow

The last twenty years or so have seen an enormous amount of research and writing about the city. It is such a rich

repository for the historian, the artist, the photographer, and even the social anthropologist, that it will be quite some time before this particular mine has been worked out. The reasons for its popularity among scholars today have been outlined above. In a many-faceted city like Lucknow there is something for everyone. But what is odd is how long it has taken for the city and its culture to be brought back to public attention.

The silence seems to have fallen after the publication in the 1920s of a series of magazine articles by Maulana Abdul Halim Sharar which were subsequently printed as *Guzashta Laknau* (Past Lucknow). Almost nothing of note was published for half a century after Sharar's pieces, and certainly nothing about the extraordinary appearance of the city and the buildings that had taken such a beating in the past. The visitor in the

6  
The ruined Banqueting  
Hall at the British  
Residency.



7

Ivory carving (an old piece) depicting the Buddha, by Mohammad Wasim of Lucknow, a UP State awardee.

1970s was still being offered, as a guidebook, material written by E.H. Hilton, one of the youngest English boys to have survived the siege of the British Residency in 1857. The Residency Museum, untouched it seemed since Independence, boasted a large model of the area during the siege, in which the surrounding buildings were labelled as "enemy outposts". (Someone later crossed out the word "enemy" and substituted "Indian".)

A number of histories and rhyming verses had been published in Persian and Urdu during the nawabi era, describing the cities of Lucknow and Faizabad and the distinguished ancestry of their rulers. Such books naturally flattered the nawabs, in fact it was an offence *not* to flatter them, as the writer Kamal-ud-din Haider found out in 1848 when the printing press used to produce his critical book was seized and shut down.

European travellers to Lucknow had no such inhibitions, of course, about what they wrote, because they had long left the city, if not the country, by the time their books were published.

But for the majority of the British public, the name of Lucknow was heard for the first time in 1857, and it is still associated, even today, in most British minds, with the events of the 1857/58 uprising. After this traumatic period it suddenly seemed that everyone (everyone British, that is) had something to say about the six-month siege of the Residency, or had sketchbooks of the ruined city to publish. The military men chipped in with stirring accounts of how the city had fallen. Luckily for us, Indian and European photographers were at work before and after the uprising, and a detailed study of their pictures is providing valuable new evidence as Sophie Gordon's chapter shows.

The first serious modern study of Awadh, using original sources, was published in 1977 by John Pemble, entitled *The Raj, the Indian Mutiny and the Kingdom of Oudh 1801–1859*. This was followed in 1980 by the American historian, Richard Barnett, who published *North India between Empires Awadh, the Mughals, and the British* in 1980. Gradually the story that had been conveniently forgotten began to emerge, a story of political chicanery and expediency by the East India Company and of unbridled extravagance by the nawabs. The rich cultural, religious, social, and artistic life of Lucknow was examined, featuring an equally rich cast of characters. In 1997 many of these themes were brought together in an edited book entitled *Lucknow: Memories of a City* with contributors from different disciplines and countries.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, Lucknow has figured in a number of fictional works too, some of which pre-date its “rediscovery” during the last quarter century. One of the favourites is *Umrao Jan Ada*, written by Mirza Muhammad Hadi Rusva in 1899. Daringly for its time, this novel tells the story of a courtesan, Umrao Jan, who is kidnapped at the age of seven and taken to a Lucknow brothel. Here she is educated in the arts of entertaining men with verse and coquetry, and she survives to enjoy a quiet, if lonely, retirement. Told in simple but elegant Urdu, hers is a didactic story, that has been filmed at least twice. An equally popular book is *Kim* by Rudyard Kipling, part of which is set in Lucknow, or Nucklao, as it is colloquially known. “There is no city – except Bombay, the queen of all – more beautiful in her garish style than Lucknow” wrote Kipling, who sends his young hero Kim to the “great old school of St Xavier’s in Partibus” which is clearly based on La Martiniere. The Indian writer I. Allan Sealy begins his first novel *Trotternama* in La Martiniere (which he calls “Sans Souci”), in which

he traces, over several generations, the sprawling Anglo-Indian Trotter family. The disturbances in Lucknow during Partition in 1947 when riot police armed with steel-tipped lathis and guns blocked off Hazratganj are vividly evoked.

It was inevitable that the siege of the Residency would have inspired British novelists, and a number of undistinguished adventure stories were indeed published in the 19th century, usually short on characterization and long on derring-do. But the best novel about 1857 is undoubtedly *The Siege of Krishnapur* by the late J.G. Farrell. Based loosely on events in Lucknow, it satirizes the earnest Victorians who found themselves penned together for months on the Residency hill, and exploits darkly comic moments during the siege.

This present volume on the city, first suggested by Marg some twelve years ago, deliberately focuses on less well known aspects of Lucknow life and history, and eschews politics, past and present. Some of the subjects covered will be unfamiliar even to those who live in Lucknow, and of interest, we hope, to all readers. This celebration of the city goes some way to restoring a little of what was taken from it all those years ago.

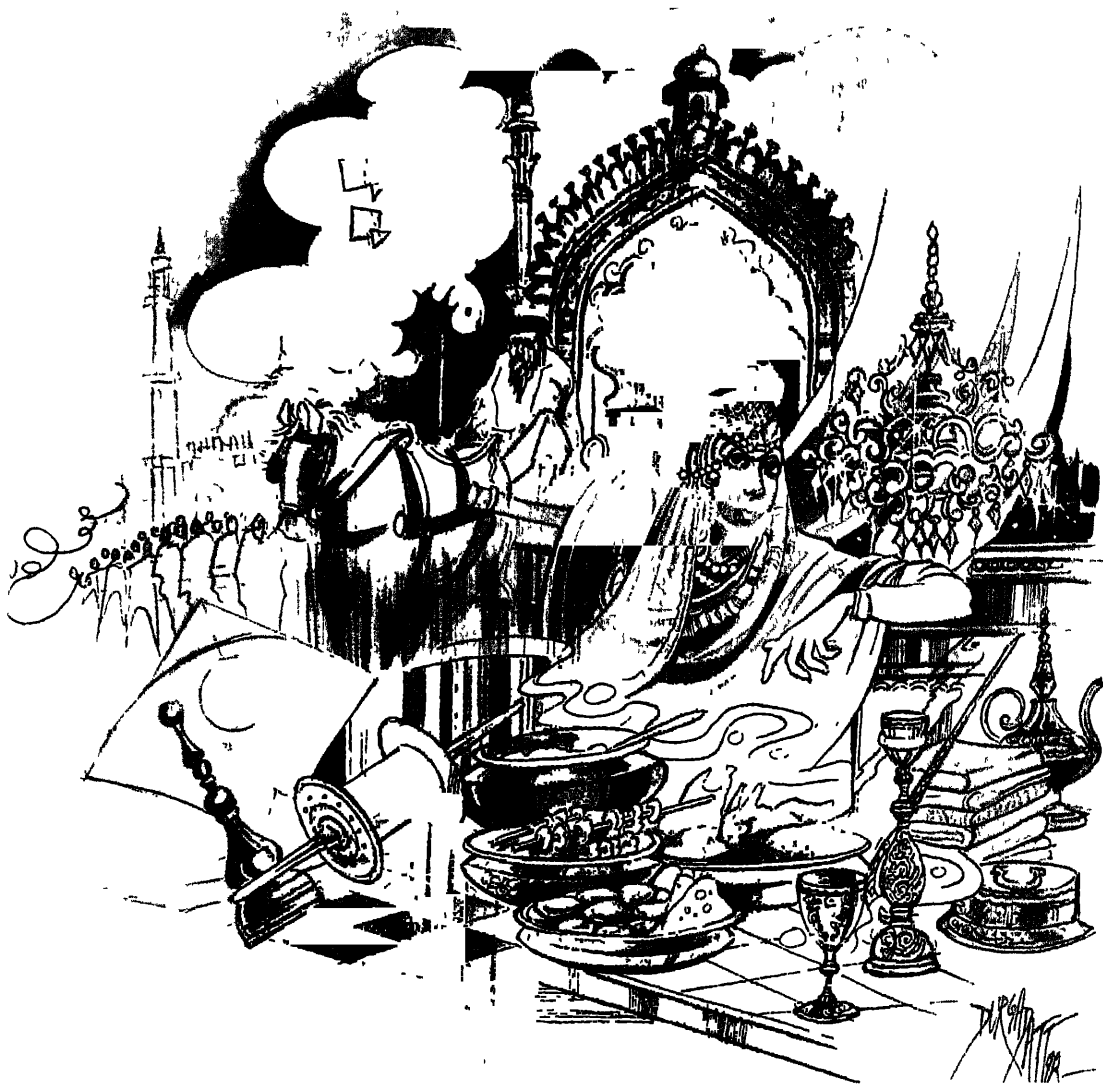
#### NOTES

1. W.H. Russell, *The Prince of Wales’ Tour A Diary in India*, London, 1877
2. For example, the Royal Engineers Officers’ mess at Chatham, Kent, has two allegorical paintings taken from the Qaisarbagh palace, which were presented to Sir Colin Campbell, who led the recapture of Lucknow, and who subsequently presented the paintings to Chatham.
3. Three churches can be identified that were in existence prior to 1856 – the church at the Mariaon cantonment, the church in the British Residency complex, and the Catholic church, or chapel, near Qaisarbagh.
4. See the Select Bibliography at the end of this volume for more details.

### **Significant Dates in the History of Nawabi and British-Period Lucknow**

1722	Burhan-ul-Mulk appointed nawab of Awadh by the Mughal Emperor
1739	accession of Safdar Jang, nephew of Burhan-ul-Mulk
1754	accession of Shuja-ud-daula, son of Safdar Jang
1774	the first British Resident is appointed to the court of Shuja-ud-daula, then at Faizabad
1775	Nawab Asaf-ud-daula succeeds his father, Shuja-ud-daula and moves the capital back to Lucknow
circa 1777	construction of buildings for the British Residency
1784	construction of the Bara Imambara
1789	completion of the Daulat Khana palace
1796	foundations laid for Constantia (later La Martiniere College)
1797	death of Asaf-ud-daula, succeeded briefly by Wazir Ali
1798	accession of Nawab Saadat Ali Khan, after the Company depose Wazir Ali
1801	Saadat Ali Khan forced to cede half of Awadh to the Company
circa 1803	building of the Chattr Manzil palace begins
1807	the Company's cantonment is established at Mariaon, north of Lucknow
circa 1810	construction of Hazratganj
1814	accession of Ghazi-ud-din Haider
1819	Ghazi-ud-din Haider crowned "King of Awadh" by the British Resident
1827	accession of Nasir-ud-din Haider
1837	accession of Muhammad Ali Shah
1841	completion of the Lucknow Observatory (the Taronwali Kothi)
1842	accession of Amjad Ali Shah
1845	opening of La Martiniere College
1847	accession of Wajid Ali Shah, the last nawab
1848	building of Qaisarbagh Palace begins, designed by Ahmed Ali Khan (Chota Miyan), an early photographer and the daroga of the Hussainabad Imambara
1856	March – Wajid Ali Shah leaves the city after its annexation by the Company
1857	May – start of the six-month siege of the British Residency November – Company Army and European civilians withdrawn from Lucknow
1858	March – recapture of the city by the Company Army Qaisarbagh Palace is looted Felice Beato takes panoramic photographs of the city
1860	establishment of the British cantonment at Dilkusha
1862	arrival of the railway in Lucknow
1877	Lucknow loses its status as capital city to Allahabad
1881	construction of the Hussainabad Clock Tower
1889	Colvin Taluqdars College established
1905	foundation of King George's Medical College & Hospital (KGMC)
1914	Charbagh Railway Station constructed
1920	Lucknow University established from three existing colleges
1928	Council Hall and Chamber opened, Lucknow is de facto capital of the United Provinces
1935–37	Walter Burley Griffin introduces the art-deco style to Lucknow
1947	August – the British Union flag on the Residency is lowered for the last time at Independence





## THE LIVING CITY



A late 18th-century building  
at the Residency, later used as  
barracks

# Off the Tourist Trail: The “Unknown” Lucknow

*Rosie Llewellyn-Jon*

“What tourists?” you may ask, for Lucknow is not on the circuit of foreign visitors, nor does it attract many Indian holidaymakers unless they have relatives living here. The attempt to promote the city as a venue for business conferences has not proved as successful as the owners of the new hotels had anticipated. The State Tourism Department, just off Hazratganj, has ambitious plans to restore the remaining Qaisarbagh gardens to their former nawabi glory, but has run into local opposition. The Residency complex, well-cared for and restored by the Archaeological Survey of India, attracts local courting couples to the gardens, but not the busloads of tourists one sees in Delhi. In fact the largest number of visitors today would not call themselves tourists, but pilgrims, people from eastern India who pass through Lucknow once a year on their way to the tomb of the Shia mystic Salim Chishti of Ajmer. Coach after coach brings them to the religious monuments put up by the nawabs, the Bara Imambara, the Rumi Darwaza, and the Hussainabad Imambara, which, for a few hours, are suddenly alive with people and vendors selling food and religious items from handcarts.

It seems unlikely that Lucknow will ever attract large numbers of foreigners. It is not so visually appealing as the lake cities of Rajasthan. It lacks the spiritual values of Varanasi, the heart-breakingly beautiful tomb at Agra, the languid charm of the Goan beaches, or the adventurous attractions of the Himalaya. A few Europeans are tempted here each year on specialist tours whose brochures describe Lucknow as a “post-Mughal city”, which is a bit like calling Hyderabad a “post-Nizam city”. A handful of “Mutiny” enthusiasts regularly visit the 19th-century battlesites and include a pilgrimage to the evocative Residency complex. La Martiniere College continues to attract some sightseers, and “old boys”, the latter often now settled abroad, but here in

search of their schooldays. Perversely, although the city lies off the route of the casual overseas traveller, it has become, over the last two decades, a magnet for academics, particularly Europeans and Americans. Its rich, complex history is now being laid out in scholarly articles and books, and the foreigners met walking along Hazratganj are just as likely to be researchers, as tourists. Another contradiction is that while Lucknow is promoted in India as “the City of the Nawabs”, the very things for which the nawabs were known are being relentlessly stripped away today. Nawabi buildings are the most visible victims, but the tehzib, the grace and courtesy of the old days is fast disappearing, along with the crafts, the food, and most worrying of all, the chaste Urdu that marked out the true Lakhnawi.

Yet as the poet Cafavy wrote of Alexandria, once visited “the city will always haunt you”, a sentiment that can equally well be applied to Lucknow, even today, even after so much has been lost. For someone who knows the city,

with that curious love/hate knowledge, it is not only the obvious sites on the itinerary of the hard-won tourist that stay in the memory. The imambaras, the Residency, the Picture Gallery, the Chattar Manzil, and the Martiniere schools are the offered attractions of the usual two-day visit, with a couple of nights at Clark’s Awadh. But there are other, less well-publicized places too.....

### The River

Strangely ignored by the majority of people today, the Gomti, which flows through Lucknow from west to east, and divides it north and south, is the city’s most visible and most undervalued asset. Geography and politics have both conspired against it becoming a popular waterway, although India’s rivers were the preferred route for transporting people and goods for thousands of years. Both the Ganga and its tributary, the Gomti, are navigable all the year round, but the Ganga has the advantage of being a major river, deep and broad, and thus more easily navigable, even with its

2

Pilgrims watching the  
tazia procession during  
Muharram







shifting sandbanks. The East India Company selected Kanpur (formerly Cawnpore) as its westernmost cantonment in the late 18th century, not only for political reasons, but because it could be reached with relative ease from Calcutta. After 1801, both banks of the Ganga were in Company-held territory, unlike the smaller Gomti, running for the most part through the semi-autonomous state of Awadh.

Frequent boats and safety of passage meant that travellers between Calcutta and Lucknow preferred to sail up-river to Kanpur, and stay overnight in the cantonment, before completing the journey by palanquin. By the mid-19th century there was a new road and a regular carriage service that made the Kanpur-Lucknow run in just eight hours. The Gomti was used mainly for cargo boats, that could take their own time between Lucknow and Calcutta, on a slower and cheaper journey. In the days

of the nawabs, boats could sail as far as Jaunpur, on a Company parwana, or permit. Then they had to wait until the nawab's parwana was obtained before proceeding up-river to Lucknow. Among the vessels that sailed on the Gomti were many curiously-named boats, the simple ekhta, the slim saranga, the dingi, and the more elaborate feelcharah (elephant-prow), the maggarcharah (crocodile-prow), and the morpankhi (peacock-prow).

In the golden days of the nawabs, Lucknow attracted people and goods like a magnet, drawing them in from other parts of the country, from West Asia, from Africa, from Europe and Britain. River traffic seemed almost a one-way phenomenon as imported luxuries sailed up to the fabulously rich court. Anything, and everything, has sailed along the now deserted Gomti, rhinoceros from Assam for the nawabs' zoos, shire-horses from England, barrel-organs from the best

3  
Fishermen's punts on the  
river Gomti.

4

Evening on the river near  
Hussainabad.



5

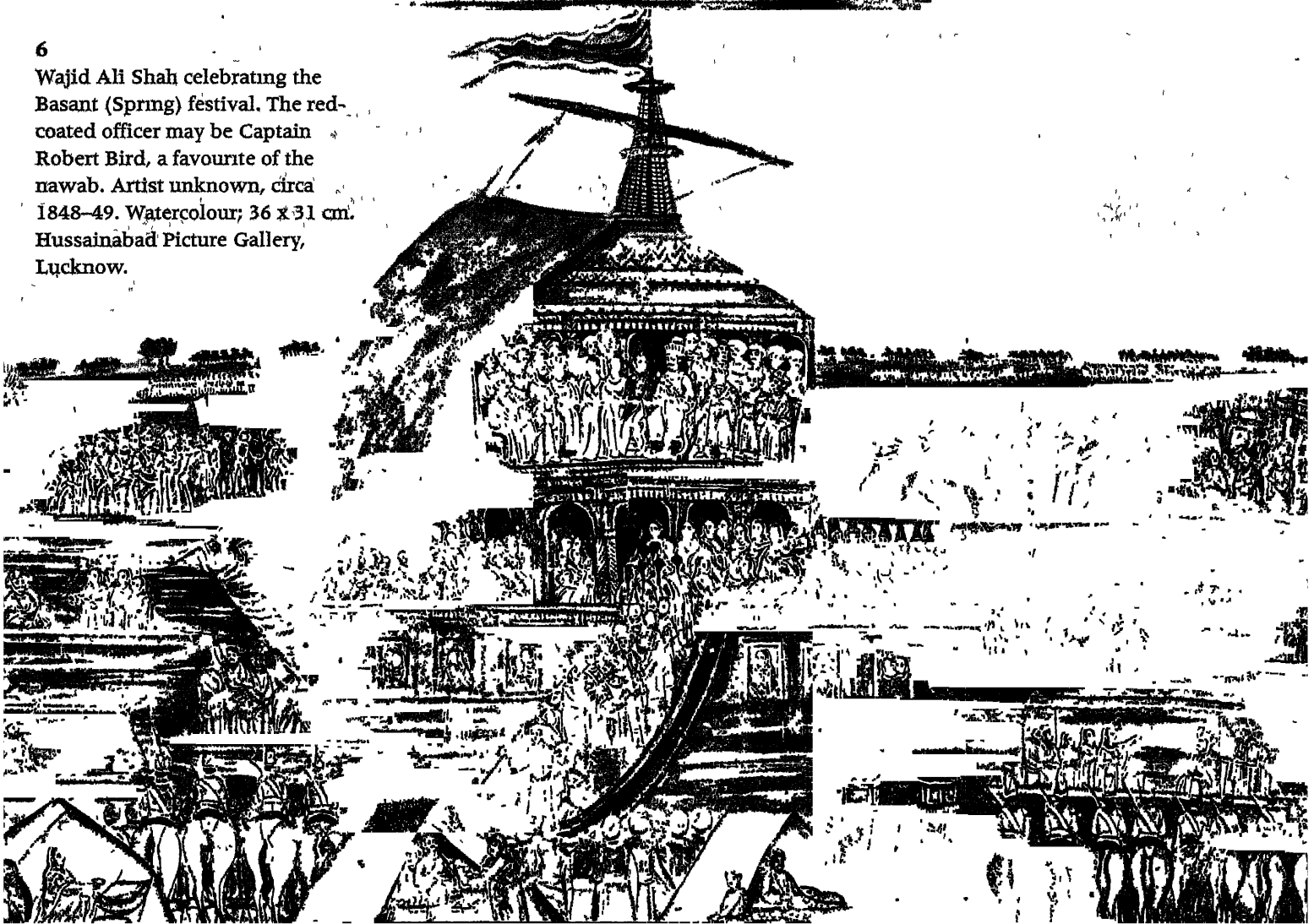
The river from the  
Rumi Darwaza





6

Wajid Ali Shah celebrating the Basant (Spring) festival. The red-coated officer may be Captain Robert Bird, a favourite of the nawab. Artist unknown, circa 1848-49. Watercolour; 36 x 31 cm. Hussainabad Picture Gallery, Lucknow.





organ-makers in Europe, huge looking-glasses from France, musical clocks and trinkets from Switzerland, crockery and silver from England, and room-sized chandeliers from Bohemia. To supply the nawabs' mania for building, the best teak came from Burma, and bamboos, needed for the scaffolding, from all over Awadh. Crushed sea-shells for chunam, the delicate marble-like plaster, came from Madras. The goods that went down-river seemed pedestrian by contrast – indigo, tobacco, saltpetre, and piece-goods, bound for the British and European markets.

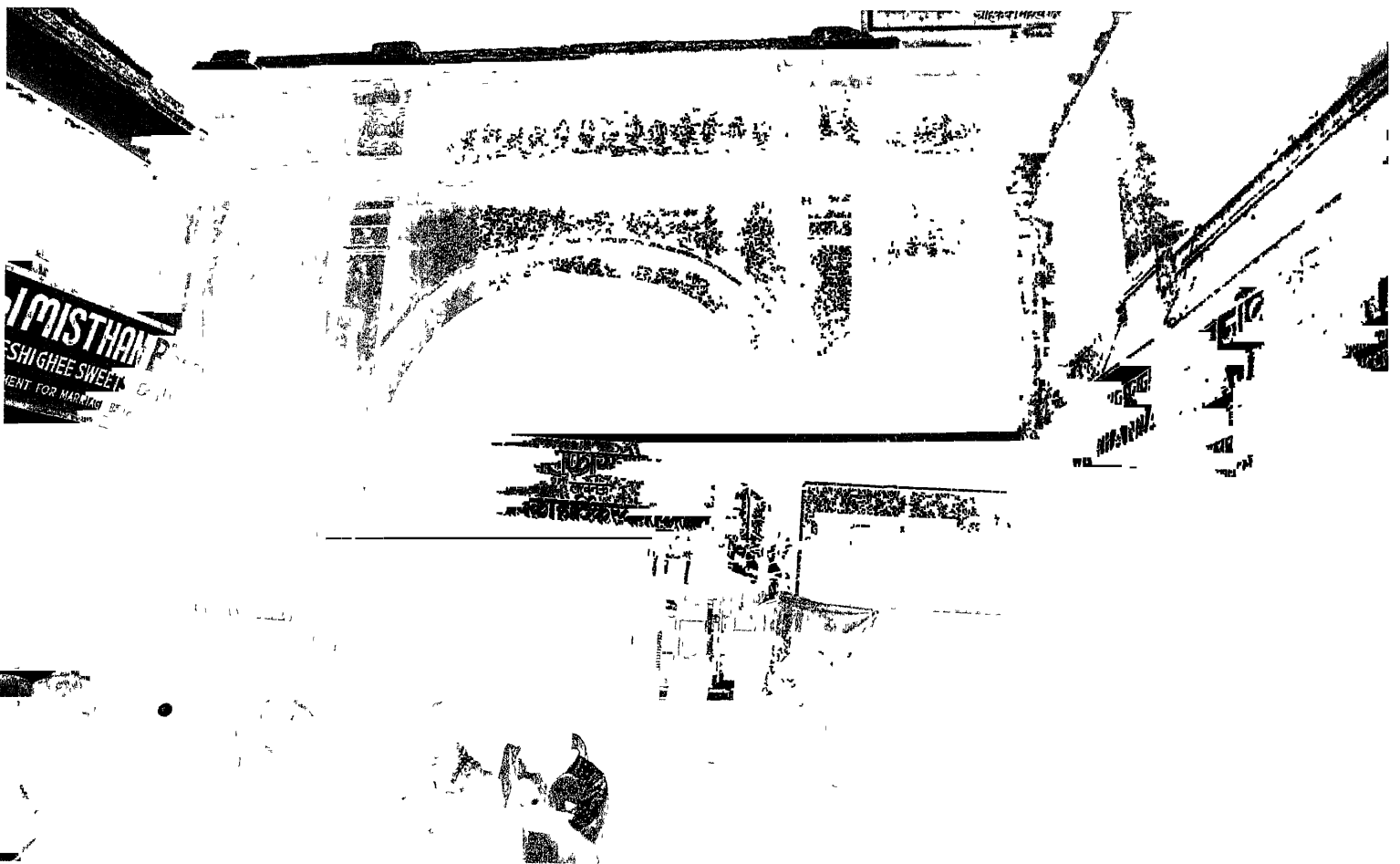
Today there is no hint of these exotic cargoes that made Lucknow, for a time, one of the richest cities in India. Not only that, but there is also no trace of the enormous number of pleasure boats that plied up and down the river, carrying the courtiers and the royal family from palace to palace, to catch the cool evening breeze. It is only from written descriptions, paintings, and early photographs that we have any idea of how popular the river was as a place of

entertainment. There are no rusting hulks along the banks, no miraculously preserved timber vessels that rise from the mud during a drought, to remind us of the past. Yet here on the river, less than a hundred and fifty years ago, were fish-shaped boats, powered by steam-engines, their "fins" elaborately constructed from wickerwork and fish-shaped rowing boats, with metal "scales" that caught the sunlight. There was the grandest boat of all, the *Sultan of Oude*, sailed up-river from a Calcutta boatyard and fitted up with a gilt stern, and looking-glasses in the cabin.<sup>1</sup> Another entertainment was to stage firework displays from punts moored in the river, so that the showers of silver and gold rain were reflected in the waters of the Gomti. Musicians stationed on both banks of the river would add to the general gaiety as the nawabs and their guests sipped champagne on the palace balconies.

If we can no longer conjure up these pictures, we can at least, in sailing on the Gomti today, appreciate the importance of

7

Gol Darwaza, Chowk.



the river to the remaining nawabi buildings. None of the river entrances remain in use today. The Farhat Bakhsh, Major General Claude Martin's town house, was designed specifically to stand in the Gomti, but its arched entrances have been concealed by the flood prevention bund for nearly thirty years. Similarly, Martin's country house, Constantia, unfinished at his death in 1800, was designed so that he could travel by river from one house to the other. The water-gate of the Shah Najaf has disappeared in a tangle of unkempt shrubbery. With the passing of the nawabs and the subsequent depopulation, the Gomti lost its importance as a place of entertainment, and a medium for elegant transport, so the riverine entrances of the palaces and other buildings silted up. Today only the fishermen's punts are visible on the river, and the new Gomti barrage means that the journey from the western palace of the Musa Bagh, or Barowen, to the eastern palace of the Dilkusha, is no longer possible. But a river trip is still one of the secret pleasures of Lucknow.

### The Chowk

This is the oldest part of Lucknow, the pre-nawabi, medieval city, developed at a right angle to the river and guarded by the Macchi Bhawan fort on the southern bank. This was the road for travellers coming in from Kanpur, and the south. The Chowk is not on anyone's tourist itinerary, and residents of Lucknow will warn you away from it, for your own good. Yet it is a fascinating area, and it is impossible to say you know Lucknow unless you have walked between its two gateways, from the Gol Darwaza to the Akbari Darwaza (and back again), taking in places of interest, tucked away up little alleys. Joseph Tieffenthaler, the Jesuit priest, described the Chowk as being "narrow, with nothing remarkable about it". He also described the merchants' houses as brick-

built, tall and solid, and he was the first of many to comment on the streets as "narrow and stinking, because the inhabitants habitually throw all their refuse into the street".<sup>2</sup>

Honesty compels me to add that things here have not improved much over the last three hundred years. Jewel-bright flies buzzed around the corpse of a small dog lying in one of the gullies, while sewage ran down another. The merchants' houses that are left here are

8

Balcony of a tawa'if, Chowk Photograph from the collection of Rosie Llewellyn-Jones.





tumbling down, and as the balconies and front walls fall away, the inner walls of lakhori brick reveal the age of these ruins. The Chowk is celebrated in fiction and history as the street of the tawa'if, the elegant, witty courtesans who were patronized by wealthy men, often at the nawabs' courts, as well as by the nawabs themselves. These women, accomplished in music and poetry, entertained their patrons in houses or rooms along the Chowk, and it is here that Umrao Jan Ada, the eponymous heroine of Mirza Muhammad Hadi Rusva's novel is taken to be trained as a tawa'if. When nawabi patronage was removed, the women and their pimps found different customers from the new ruling classes, the landowners or taluqdars and the British soldiers. The Chowk became known to the British as the red-light area of Lucknow, and even into the 1940s it continued to attract the odd British soldier, disguised under a burqa, for the street was strictly out of bounds, of course, for the "tommies". It is this raffish atmosphere that gives the Chowk some of its character today, and it is no coincidence that the Kotwali, or police station, stands prominently just by the Gol Darwaza entrance.

Vice and virtue exist together, for there are a number of religious buildings tucked away, that are worth climbing up and down for. The Ram Mandir, the Bishati Masjid, the Saudagar Imambara, the Tehsin Masjid, and the Mohammadia Masjid are here, in their compounds, together with a number of madrassas (religious schools), and the spacious Darul Shifa, the old city hospital. Here too, is the earliest European settlement, the Farangi Mahal, established in the mid-17th century by a number of adventurous East India Company traders, who were exporting indigo, sugar, and doriyabad (striped cloth) to England, via the Company port at Surat.<sup>3</sup> The Lucknow "factory", the warehouse where goods were collected and stored for

export, existed here for nearly a decade, between 1647 and 1655. After the traders were recalled, the house and factory were subsequently given by Emperor Aurangzeb to the family of the Sahalvi mullahs, who established an influential school of logic and philosophy here. The accessible courtyards of this large complex show its antiquity in their crumbling walls and doorways, but little of architectural interest is visible.

Directly north of the Farangi Mahal is the Haider Bakhsh Kuan, known locally as "Kaptan Kunwa", a medieval resting place for travellers – a serai, built around a well. Although the stone-capped well is no longer in use, the small windowless rooms around it have been adapted by shopkeepers and tailors. Here travellers would have rested, and pilgrims on their way to the nearby tomb of Shah Mina, the 15th-century Muslim mystic, who is buried south of the Macchi Bhawan fort. Climbing up the steps to the serai from the Chowk, one hears the old Jesuit Tieffenthaler grumbling again because "the ground is so uneven that one cannot walk about in this city except by detours, climbing up here, going down there". The serai's well would originally have been sunk in a small hillock, overlooking the nullah that later became the main street. Another elevated area is the Hiran Park, a welcome open space among the jostling buildings, and perhaps a place where tame deer really did wander about in the old days.

In 1830 in the reign of the playboy king, Nasir-ud-din Haider, the famous perfumier Asghar Ali was invited from Kanauj to re-create his fragrances in Lucknow. His first small shop stood at the Akbari Darwaza, and sales were so good that by 1839 he had established a factory and built himself a splendid haveli in the Chowk. Asghar Ali specialized in a range of related products including scented tobacco, qiwan or tobacco pills in silver leaf, missi or tooth powder, surma for the eyes, and itr or

9

A Lucknow beauty. Artist unknown, circa 1850. Oil painting State Museum, Lucknow.



otto of roses, as it was called in Europe. The founder was joined by his nephew Mohammed Ali in 1885, and for a century or more the firm exported goods all over India and abroad. Sadly, the Chowk building, which was extensively refurbished in the 1880s, stands empty today, and the perfumed air that led one to it by the nose seems to have dissipated for ever. (The firm maintains a little shop in the Aminabad bazaar.) The Madrassa-i-Furkania, which stands off Tulsi Das Marg, was set up by the pious Asghar Ali to provide free instruction for Muslim boys.

One is never far away from poetry and poets in Lucknow, and the lane called Kucha-e-Mir Anis and the Maqbara Mir Anis, remind us of this gifted man, the last court poet, famous for his marsiyas, or elegies. He was buried here in 1874 in a simple, elegant tomb, which has escaped the ignominious fate of that of an earlier, more famous poet,

Mir Muhammad Taqi, whose grave now lies beneath the city railway station.

In and around the Chowk, which is properly speaking, an area stretching beyond the two gates, the Gol and Akbari Darwazas, and into the Serai Male Khan, are the substantial havelis of the old merchants, hidden away up winding alleys, approached up perilous steps, or through dark archways and passages. W.H. Russell, the Irish journalist, must have been thinking of this area when he wrote in 1857 that: "The native city is an aggregate of houses perforated by tortuous paths, so that a plan of it would resemble a section of worm-eaten wood."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, seen in plan from above, the twisting alleys do seem to mark the trajectory of demented worms, burrowing through solid clumps of matter, that are the houses, temples, mosques, madrassas, courtyards, and shops of this crowded area. The organic, honeycomb-like development of buildings was governed,

10

Perfume seller Ghufran Ahmad Abbasi and his wares. His is the fourth generation in this business.



as we have seen, by the uneven nature of the ground, divided by nullahs, filled with water during the monsoon rains. It was also influenced by particular centres of interest like the Farangi Mahal seminary, which attracted scholars from all over India, bringing their own needs for accommodation and eating places.

It is easy to see how the old, intricate city was anathema to the British, especially after the trauma of the siege of the Residency and the recapture of Lucknow in 1858. It epitomized all the obsessions of the Victorian empire-builders. It was easily defensible by people who knew its alleys and blind corners by heart. It was undoubtedly a breeding ground for disease from the filth lying in the alleys, and it was a hotbed for crime and insurrection. The British dealt with these problems in several radical ways. They forced broad military roads through the densest areas, like Tulsi Das Marg (formerly Victoria Street), which runs parallel to the Chowk. They razed whole mohallas, areas where people lived, to the ground where they judged them to be particularly defensible. They cleaned and repaired existing drains, built public latrines, and made freeholders responsible for keeping their neighbourhoods free of accumulated filth.<sup>5</sup> Surveys of the city were made, in an attempt to find some kind of pattern and order in what seemed a chaotic mess of buildings. Areas were divided into thanas, police districts, and the old system of patrolling watchmen or chowkidars fell into disuse, although ironically this led to an increase in theft as the police were more concerned with putting down mob trouble than investigating burglaries.

There are few descriptions of the old city during the nawabi era, and none of them detailed, so its history can only really be pieced together by observation and interview. In contrast there are minute descriptions of the new city that

developed along the banks of the Gomti after Asaf-ud-daula reinstated his capital here in 1775. It is, of course, the great set-pieces, the palaces, the imambaras, the nawabi maqbaras, and Hazratganj, that are being sold to tourists today as the authentic Lucknow. But seen from the Chowk, there is something rather, dare one say it, parvenu, about the “new” city, created by foreigners from Persia. The fact that many of the nawabs’ buildings were themselves interpretations of even more foreign buildings, from England and western Europe, adds another layer of complexity to the architectural history of Lucknow.

Certainly there is no shortage of things to see here, while the river remains stubbornly empty of boats and the Chowk obstinately full of people, animals, and traffic. But things are changing. The pleasure of a river trip, lost for generations, may be rediscovered. The greater convenience of Western-style houses over the old courtyard houses or havelis, is leading to a move away from the old city and into the new suburbs like Gomti Nagar. Lucknow is a city once more in transition.

#### NOTES

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## Lucknow Food, Streets, and Bazaars

*Mukul Mangalik*

Mangoes, green and yellow ones, luscious red-topped golden ones, shapes as subtly varied as the many hues, would arrive in Lucknow piled onto horse-drawn carts as if on a flood-tide. Suddenly they would be all over the city, seductive splashes of colour in the scorching heat of early June. Mangoes made me long for summer when I was growing up in Lucknow. There was a divine quality to the anticipation of succulence in the rasping dryness of the pre-monsoon heat.

Each new summer now seems to come with a bit less “loo” and a lot more sweat-wrenching heaviness. The “dussehri-langda” green is becoming the only colour of the mountains of mangoes that pour into Lucknow every day. Yet a festival happens daily in Lucknow’s mango bazaars, people swarming over mango-sellers like bees over honey. Mangoes are still eaten heartily and with gusto, in and around Lucknow. “Go to Malihabad”, said Shamim Altaf ecstatically, “and you’ll find people sitting on ‘khaats’, gorging themselves on mangoes until the mounds of peel reach their chins.”

The dussehri is certainly a lovely mango, “but there is more to mangoes than dussehris and langdas.” Dr Mehra laughed and continued excitedly, “Just this morning I received a call informing me, ‘Doctor saheb, the glass is ripe, heavy. Nawab saheb would like you over.’ A mango named ‘glass’! you can see the juice flowing inside its exquisitely fine skin.”

Awadhi mango names ignite fantasies: gulabkhas, lab-e-mashuk, khas-ul-khas. “Let me tell you a story or two.” Dr Mehra was unstoppable. “I used to go into the Qaisarbagh market to buy mangoes in my old green Austin 555. Next to my fruit-seller sat an old woman whom I’d want to buy from but she’d never have what I wanted. One afternoon my man was not there. I paused and drove on slowly. Behind me ran the old woman, flailing her arms, a mango in each hand, shouting, ‘Doctor saheb, stop, husnara, husnara.’ For one funny, embarrassing moment I felt the entire bazaar stopped still. I don’t think most people knew that husnara (beauty of beauties) referred to the mangoes in her hands.

1  
Malihabad dussehri  
mangoes being sorted for  
sale.





"Two years ago, Kalimullah saheb invited me to his orchard in Malihabad. He wanted me to taste a special mango, his late father's favourite, the abdullah-pasand, and to christen a new delight. The flavour lingering in my mouth I named it ehwar-ul-asmar [star among fruits], there already being the shams-ul-asmar [sun among fruits], the mehr-ul-asmar [moon among fruits], and of course, the hugely popular samar bahisht [fruit of paradise] or chausa."

Each mango name in Awadh strikes a musical chord. String them together and you have a composition. When I skin the aslul-muqarrar or the muffarril-e-qulub and bite into the flesh I wonder what I'm enjoying more – the name or the fruit in my mouth!

#### Summer of '99

Lucknow is home and I go there once every six or seven weeks. I make pilgrimages to places I'm particularly fond of, such as the Bara and the Chota Imambaras, or the Dargah of Syed Kasim Shah inside the Residency. I wander through old bazaars like Nakkhas, Chowk, and Aminabad eating galawat ke kabab here, a little balai there, watching kites duel in the sky, all along enjoying

listening to people speak. I find the sound of Lakhnawi as pleasing to the ear as the touch of the early morning namash is to the tongue. There is always work to be done, friends and relatives to be met, and my uncle Ram Advani's very special bookshop to be visited. When time is too short for all the things that I want to (or have to) do, I make do with imagined meanderings.

The last days of June '99 were tormentingly humid in Lucknow. One evening the clouds came in, the rain came down and a breeze blew that seemed to take the summer away. Later that evening I sat with Dr Mehra in his green, rainwashed garden and listened to him talk about mangoes. It was late by the time I got up to leave, well past Dr Mehra's regular Tuesday chaat outing hour. A stickler for time and incredibly set in his habits, I thought it said a lot for his passion for mangoes that he didn't seem to mind missing his gol gappas and aalu ki tikkiyan at Shukla's chaat redhi outside the Post Master General's Office in Hazratganj, especially on that singularly beautiful evening.

Lucknow-wallahs love their chaat sold on thelās like Shukla's, or at kiosks such as the green King of Chaat stand on





3  
Eating gol gappas at a  
chaat seller's stall,  
Banwali Gali, Chowk

the road between the Stadium and the State Bank of India, or of course at modest restaurants like Sharma's, a favourite middle-class hangout at Lalbagh, renowned across the city for tea as much as chaat. The best tikkis Dr Mehra had ever had in Lucknow were during his Intermediate days, way back in the 1940s, at a street-corner joint near the present-day Anand Cinema roundabout. He couldn't remember the chaatwala's name but he reminisced about the man refusing to hurry his measured pace of work for the crowds milling around him at all times, almost as if he were saying, "something as good as the tikkis I make takes time; if you're in a rush, please leave."

#### Chowk, Kababs, Nehari

Chowk is among the oldest continuously inhabited areas of Lucknow. Significant settlement and commercial activity date back to around the late 16th or early 17th century, when Jaunpur under its Sharqui rulers, rather than either Faizabad or Lucknow, was Awadh's major urban centre. But Chowk really came into its own as the hub of a very dense web of fine artisanal work and intense commercial dealings towards the end of the 18th century when



Lucknow became the capital of Awadh. From Chowk and Nakkhas to Aminabad and Hazratganj, the eighty-odd years preceding 1857 saw the emergence of early modern Lucknow. Rulership, of course, was the monopoly of nawabs and taluqdars, neither entirely modern nor democratic; but economic activity in town and country was in the throes of a near revolution, throwing up new social groups and classes with new desires and aspirations. Most fascinatingly, every element that made up the complex of

4  
Frying aalu ki tikkian,  
Banwali Gali, Chowk.

everyday life in Lucknow, from language and dress to music and cuisine, seemed in this period to have been touched by the Muse, "everything so exquisite, in every word such rhyme and elegance...."

Akbari Gate is where Chowk and Nakkhas come together. From the Chowk end of the Gate come sounds of quick and regular hammer blows, of something being beaten into shape; and very fine, dispersing clouds of aromatic blue smoke. Little workshops line both sides of Chowk's main street. Two or three men sit in each, pounding little pieces of silver into gossamer-thin foil to be used in decorating murg-mussallam or zarda pulao, a chandi qalia or the malai paan, and a variety of other sweets and desserts. On the same street, a stone's throw away from the Akbari Gate, opposite a small halwai's shop known for its early morning jalebis and samosas, is one of Chowk's most popular eateries – the tunde ke kabab shop. It is an unpretentious place, with an open front and a fairly large, rather dark and austere interior. Two stoves up front, facing the main street, and open to the gaze of passers-by, constitute the heart of the

eatery. Daily, a little after mid-day, and then again around 7.30 pm, work gets into full swing. Two young men, normally wearing lungis and vests, and sweating profusely, stand over a large pan, frying and flattening small, unevenly rounded, fairly ordinary looking kababs. A slightly older man sits over a convex pan on the other stove turning out fresh waraqui parathas. The entire operation, labour-intensive and unhurriedly performed, appears to be rather run-of-the-mill, but the aroma is arresting, and the number of people going in and coming out, just standing on the street, chatting and eating, lend this place a special feel. Tunde ke shahi galawat ke kabab come four on a metal plate with one paratha for ten rupees. Tunde kababi turns out, in a most unselfconscious manner, one of Lucknow's most delectable kabab preparations for a primarily working and lower middle-class clientele, both Hindus and Muslims.

#### Master Cooks

I met Haji Rais on a sultry morning in June. Well into his seventies he is the keeper of the secrets of the shahi galawat



handed down to him by Haji Murad Ali Saheb. Haji Murad Ali, it is said, fell off the roof of a house and had to lose an arm as a result. He continued being a bawarchi (cook), perfecting the mixture for the shahi galawat and working expertly with only one hand. It was during his time that the kabab and the eatery became popular. Instead of being called the shahi galawat the kababs came to be known as “tunde ke kabab”, or kababs made by the one-handed man. One of the few people who clearly remembered Haji Murad Ali at work, apart, of course, from Haji Rais, was Hakim Safdar Nawab Saheb of Shifa Manzil, at Ghasiyari Mandi. Haji Murad Ali represented a generation of cooks who were negotiating a transition from being highly esteemed and privileged bawarchis and rakabdars employed by kings and the nobility, to becoming shopowners, forced to market their professional skills in the bazaars of the post-nawabi new colonial age. The story seems to have been similar in the case of Haji Abdur Rahim Saheb who set up the Rahim Hotel diagonally across the street from tunde kababi sometime during the second half of the 19th century. His recipe for the gilafi kulche and the nehari khaas still used by Haji Zubair, eldest among Haji Rahim’s five male descendants, continues to be an unmatched popular favourite. Ali Husain Saheb, another turn-of-the-century figure is remembered as the father of the sheermal in Lucknow, at least in and around the Chawalwali Gali, more popularly known as the Sheermal Gali, where his shop still survives. In fact, Muhammadan, a master baker to the nawabi court, was the real creator of the sheermal in Lucknow, but in popular memory it is Ali Husain Saheb, perhaps because with the death of patronage, it was he who brought the sheermal on to the streets and made it into a popular food.

Haji Wahid Ali Saheb was cook to Justice J.N. Mulla. He would cook for the



judge alone, on a monthly salary of 4–6 annas. In 1922, Justice Mulla helped get him a job as a cook at the Lucknow Gymkhana Club where he worked until 1960, all the while training his son Haji Sakhawat on the job. In 1960, when his father died, Haji Sakhawat moved out of the Gymkhana Club and set up his own little eatery a couple of hundred yards away inside a garage in a lane behind the Club. Today, the Haji himself is no more, but his son, Mushtaq continues to practise the secret rituals and details of inimitable Awadhi cooking at Sakhawat’s.

6  
Mohammad Yakub, son of  
Mohammad Jaan, making  
kababs at Akbari Gate.

Haji Rais looked tired already at 8.30 am when I met him, but I was struck by his effort to retain a gravity and dignity of bearing as also a charming old-worldly Lakhnawi politeness while he spoke with me. He was modest to the core about the quality of his work, and almost matter-of-fact about the amount of labour that he still must have to put in, to keep afloat in today's new world of high-power advertising creating new tastes in food. Haji Saheb's son Osman looks after a new restaurant that the family has opened in Aminabad very close to Prakash's Kulfi, and his son-in-law, Abu-Bakr, has taken over the reins at the Chowk eatery, but I could see that Haji Saheb refused to rest.

Early every morning, he goes to the Tarkari Mandi, the vegetable market. He personally controls and supervises the secrets of the galawat and spices for the kaccha keema. The rest of the day he spends flitting from one shop to the other, with visits to the doctor in between, battling the contradiction between keeping the money rolling in and preserving the sanctity of the original recipe of the shahi galawat.

### In the Face of Junk

Tunde ke kabab and Rahim's kulche-nehari have exploded out of the confines of the narrow lanes of Chowk and Nakkhas into the world of five-star cuisine and the occasional food festival. Yet a regular market continues to be crucial to the survival of men like Haji Rais, Osman, Haji Zubair, and Mushtaq, and the wonderful mysteries of their cooking styles. Lucknow's labouring poor, and sections of the middle and lower-middle classes are the ones that have saved the good old tunde, the nehari and gilafi kulche, and the sheermal from slipping into obscurity.

While most of India's new middle classes move inexorably towards junk foods, junk ideas, junk values, and nuclear visions, and tend increasingly to talk about rigidly compartmentalized, not-to-be shared Muslim and Hindu foods, it is the plebians who have developed noble palates; and they couldn't care less, at least for the moment, whether the meat they're eating is beef or mutton, the kababs and the nehari Muslim or Hindu food. Should they be either, so be it. They'll eat on regardless, happily.





Mushtaq, like Haji Rais, Haji Zubair, and the two Mobeen brothers who run a kulche nehari, kabab, and korma eatery next to Haji Zubair's, is crucial to the special zaiqa of the different foods sold everyday from his outlet. He agreed that this meant a lot of work, personal attention, care, and very critically, control over labour. In fact, the Mobeen brothers recruited labour from the Gonda-Bahraich region on a short-term daily-wage basis precisely because they felt this gave them, as proprietors, greater bargaining power. But all this, Mushtaq would take in his stride "if only the people who come to eat know and really enjoy what they are eating. The younger, prosperous crowd which is beginning to come to my place to eat, simply want 'meat'. They cannot even discern whether they are eating lamb, mutton, or beef, forget the finer details of how best which portion of which meat is to be prepared and eaten. I feel like a musician who is putting in a lot of effort to be true to his art and play the best he can, as he always has done, but for some reason now, the audience simply doesn't respond as before. To them one sound is as good as another, there's nothing special to each piece of music. This is what saddens me, worries me the most about my work in the present."

Sakhawat's clientele continues to be predominantly non-Muslim "and the better-off people among the non-Muslims. In fact, I remain closed on Tuesdays and on festivals like Janamashtami when most of my clients simply don't come." Mushtaq, like most of the others I spoke with, refused to admit to the possibility of a communalization of food habits impacting negatively on his work in the near future; but while his major concern was how he and his sons were going to cope with the inability of more and more people to appreciate what they were eating, for people like Hajis Rais and Zubair, and the Mobeen brothers,



catering to a poorer, mixed Hindu and Muslim clientele, the problem was that their clients didn't have the money to pay for all the goodness that needed to go into the kababs and the neharis if they were to be true to the original recipes. The Mobeen brothers stated quite frankly, that their nehari would never taste as good as the one from Delhi or Lahori nehari because they had to compromise on the ingredient mix. They were open not just in the morning but through the day and selling portions worth sometimes only a rupee! Nearby, in Sheermal Gali, the sheermals come out orange in colour, but the orange comes from chemical colouring because saffron is unaffordable.

8  
Sheermal Gali

9  
Parathas, naans, and  
sheermals.

Yet, everyone eating at Haji Zubair's swore that the nehari khaas and kulche were the best you could get anywhere in Lucknow, while on a quiet afternoon in the Sheermal Gali, a young man, his mouth reddened with paan waiting outside Syed Ali Akhtar's little bakery for the sheermals he had ordered, declaimed, "I grew up in these very galis but now work in Bombay where it is possible to get the sheermal, but the sheermal in this Lucknow gali is something else. Generally it's eaten with kabab, but eat it with korma. It will melt so in the mouth you'll simply love it."

There is no doubt that the streets and galis of Lucknow still offer some wonderful old fare but it is clear that the going is tough for the practitioners of this art and the road ahead is likely to get rougher, not least because of communalist attempts to tear asunder composite traditions of the making and eating of some of the most divinely imaginative food in the world. If Urdu could come to be looked upon as the language only of Muslims, to be therefore shunned by all non-Muslims, there is every reason to believe that the kabab, nehari, and pulao may also come to be seen as foods exclusive to Muslims.

10

Raja's thandai at Chowk.



One of the reasons why Urdu has survived against really heavy odds has been the sheer power of the beauty of the language. The same power, the secret art of transforming meat and bones or vegetables into a sensual culinary experience, may be the ultimate weapon in the armoury of people like Hajis Rais and Zubair, of cooks living in bawarchi tolas like the one near Agha Mir ki Deorhi in Lucknow, and begums, such as the Begum of Kurki and Shamim Sahiba, sequestered in kothis and havelis in the city and outside.

### Living to Eat

Hakim Safdar Nawab Saheb is old and charming. I was captivated seeing him enter the room I'd been welcomed into by his son Hakim Khawar Nawab at their residence at Shifa Manzil. He wore a crisp white kurta-pajama and came in bearing freshness and grace. He spoke endearingly, in chaste Urdu about Allah-bande, an old cook, long dead, of his hands permanently reddened with saffron and the expert gaze and grunts with which he directed his cooking, never tasting, knowing from the looks and the aromas alone, when what needed to be done, be it in the shab degh or the mutanjan, both very rare, now almost forgotten delicacies from Awadhi cuisine.

Allah-bande was once informed by Raja Saheb Mahmudabad that one of the noble guests invited to a dinner to be hosted by the Raja wished to eat something that looked like and tasted of mutton without actually being meat at all. Allah-bande created a real kundan qalia and a simulated one. The royal guest simply couldn't believe that what he was eating was in fact vegetarian!

Haji Mohammad Fakr-e-Alam Saheb used to be renowned among other things, for his moti ("pearl") pulao, while the Begum of Kurki still makes the very unusual and incredibly delicate patili kababs. One rakabdar specialized only in making arvi ka salan. His major



11

Imartis being made in  
Banwali Gali, Chowk

condition for working with anyone, even post-1857, was that he be allowed to serve a different kind of arvi ka salan twice every day the whole year round! Stories abound, of cooks, their eccentricities and their unsurpassable, often “veiled” creations. An old nawab recalled an occasion when on removing the lid from a dish that had been ceremoniously sent him, he discovered a single puffed puri. Peeved and puzzled, he punctured the puri with his finger. To his immense surprise, a small bird flew out of it. This was the parind puri.

During the 100-odd years between the mid-18th and mid-19th centuries, Awadhi cooks vied with each other to please their patrons with the best, most unusual foods they could create while patrons duelled amongst themselves to host ever better, more exotic “daawats”. Sensuality ruled and food became a very powerful statement of class and social position. Cooking turned into an art, the site for a grand mingling of the material sciences with sensibilities and heritages both indigenous and European, especially French. It spawned bawarchis and rakabdars, degshos, masalchis, and aabdaars; specialized utensils came into

being and hakims, vaidas, and perfumiers got drawn into preparing recipes. But precisely because cooking was a site, simultaneously for symbiosis and contestation, secrecy became equally necessary and came to constitute the other core of bawarchi gharanas. Hakim Saheb was convinced that “no-one today could make a pista-badam ki khichri à la allah-bande”, just as Haji Zubair felt that he has “never known a kababi like Asghar Mian who belonged to my locality, Nakkhas”, but almost everyone I spoke with including Altaf Saheb and his wife Shamim Sahiba, Shaama Saheb and my old friends Munnu Rizvi and Sunny Tikkoo, as also my own wanderings in the city, convinced me that good old Awadhi food lives on in Lucknow.

#### Reinventing Tastes

The making of colonial Lucknow went hand in hand with an all-out effort to destroy as much as possible of the old, to reinvent among other things, even the tastes of the city. Hazratganj saw the emergence of new kinds of eateries purveying new kinds of cuisine in a new kind of ambience.



12  
Ram Asrey's original  
shop, established 1805.  
Suman Behari is at the  
counter.

13  
Malai paan and lal peda  
from Ram Asrey's.

Valerio's, a pastry shop with a dance floor was unlike anything that Lucknow had ever seen. It was gone before the British, but only after it had lent Hazratganj, together with a number of other coffee and tea shops, "a cosmopolitan café-market resort of Egypt or Morocco kind of air.... The cosmopolitan character of Hazratganj underwent a change after the departure of the British. Many beautiful shops

belonging to Muslim families suddenly had new bewildered Panjabi owners; but this was also a time of great discovery for youngsters. A great weight had been lifted off their shoulders and cinema, the dance floor, and the China Bar were theirs for the picking. Here, the swing and the jive could be improvised without the fear of the white daddy or the stern British college principal and a glass of beer could be gulped down just after having fun with the suave tongewala or tongewali."

[Amaresh Misra, *Lucknow: Fire of Grace*, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 257–58]

The casually elegant Benbows and the Royal Café served tea and cream-buns, while Kwaliti's in the Mayfair building, with its Grill-room on the first floor, Swiss pastries, chicken patties, and liveried waiters, became for Lucknow's new haute society, by the mid-1960s, the restaurant to meet, eat, and be seen at. The '60s also witnessed Jone Hing, the Chinese shoe-maker's shop in Hazratganj, beginning to cook and sell chowmein and chapsuey. It was cheap, dark, and romantic and beer could be smuggled in and drunk on the sly. It became such a great hit with the young that by the late '70s Jone Hing became more a restaurant than a shoe business. Today it feels much as it did many years ago, though, like all other restaurants in Hazratganj no longer the craze it used to be.

Lucknow's fin de siècle young seem to want to remain out in the open. The street and the promenade, rather than the quiet seclusion of the restaurant, have become the site and time-pass of the rendezvous. People flock to Chhedilal, while through the day, crowds throng the Ranjan Café kiosk eating burgers and drinking coffee. Very few probably remember that Ranjan's started in the '60s as the quiet Roadside Rover's where Altaf Saheb sold Lakhnawi biryani and shami kabab. Now, of course, with even Kwaliti's gone, it would be difficult to find old Awadhi cuisine anywhere in Hazratganj.

### Living on Sweetly

Valerio's went and the coffee house came in. Professor D.D. Sharma, like many teachers, writers and journalists, poets like Majaz, and women like Ila Chandra Joshi before him, is a coffee house "adde-baaz". On his way to or from the coffee house, he slips into nearby Narahi with its halwais. Like many Lucknow-wallahs he too is a great one for the rabri and balai from Saligram's 120-year-old shop.

I've been to Saligram's as well as to the balaiwala who sits by Gate no. 2 Ghalla Bazaar, near the Chota Imambara, his balai a favourite with Hakim Saheb. But the best balai I've ever eaten was at Altaf Saheb's house. Shamim Sahiba laid out shami kababs and seviyon ka muzaffar with balai. I ate like I'd never get to eat again. Altaf Saheb reminisced fondly about Mithaniya, the woman who'd come home daily when he was a boy with smooth, thick, very mildly sweetened balai; and "as for shops, the balai and Kashmiri tea at Samad's, on Chowk's Victoria Street, were inimitable". The "kahwa" like the shabdeg and saffron, came into Lucknow

with Kashmiri families and the Kabuliwallah during the 18th century, and remains popular with Lucknowites especially in winter when the old Samad shop suddenly comes alive.

The Gol Darwaza end of Chowk is a round-about of chaos. There is no meat here nor the light aromatic smoke of Akbari Gate. Yet in the manner of the "maghrebi azaan", soaring above the screech of brakes and the screams of horns, Radhey Lal's lassi and Raja's thandai, attract irresistibly. A little further away, less than ten minutes down the oasis-like quietness of the narrow Banwali Gali is Ram Asrey's, making and selling sweets since 1805.

I went to Ram Asrey's that same rainy breezy evening that I visited Dr Mehra. The younger of the two brothers sat peaceably behind the counter greeting passers-by with a Ram-Ram or an aadaab, selling dalmoth for as little as a rupee, lal peda for ten.

I asked for "malai paan" and tasted it tentatively. It was divine, as finely crafted for the palate as Lucknow's anonymously, nimbly-worked "chikankari" is on cloth. I wished I would come here more often



14  
Gaya Prasad, the famous  
namash seller at Gol  
Darwaza, Chowk.





15  
Nawab Sarwat Jahan  
Begum making paan to a  
traditional recipe.

instead of conveniently hopping across to Chowdhury's or Ram Asrey's in Hazratganj.

Chowdhury's is a post-Partition business and the Hazratganj Ram Asrey's was set up a few years ago by the older of the two brothers. Chowdhury's became famous for "boondi laddoos" and "milk pudding" but today, the Ganj Ram Asrey's and Chowdhury's, Chhappan Bhog and Mini Mahal have become Lucknow's happening mithai places. For a taste of the old Lucknow, however, you need to bite into Prakash's kulfi, the Raja Bazaar "dudhiya barfi", the kabravali dukaan ki kachhori and the mithais from

the old Ram Asrey's. Craftsmen like Abdullah Halwai of Aminabad are of course no longer alive, but the secret recipes of earlier halwais live on in at least some of the sweets coming out from the heart of the old city.

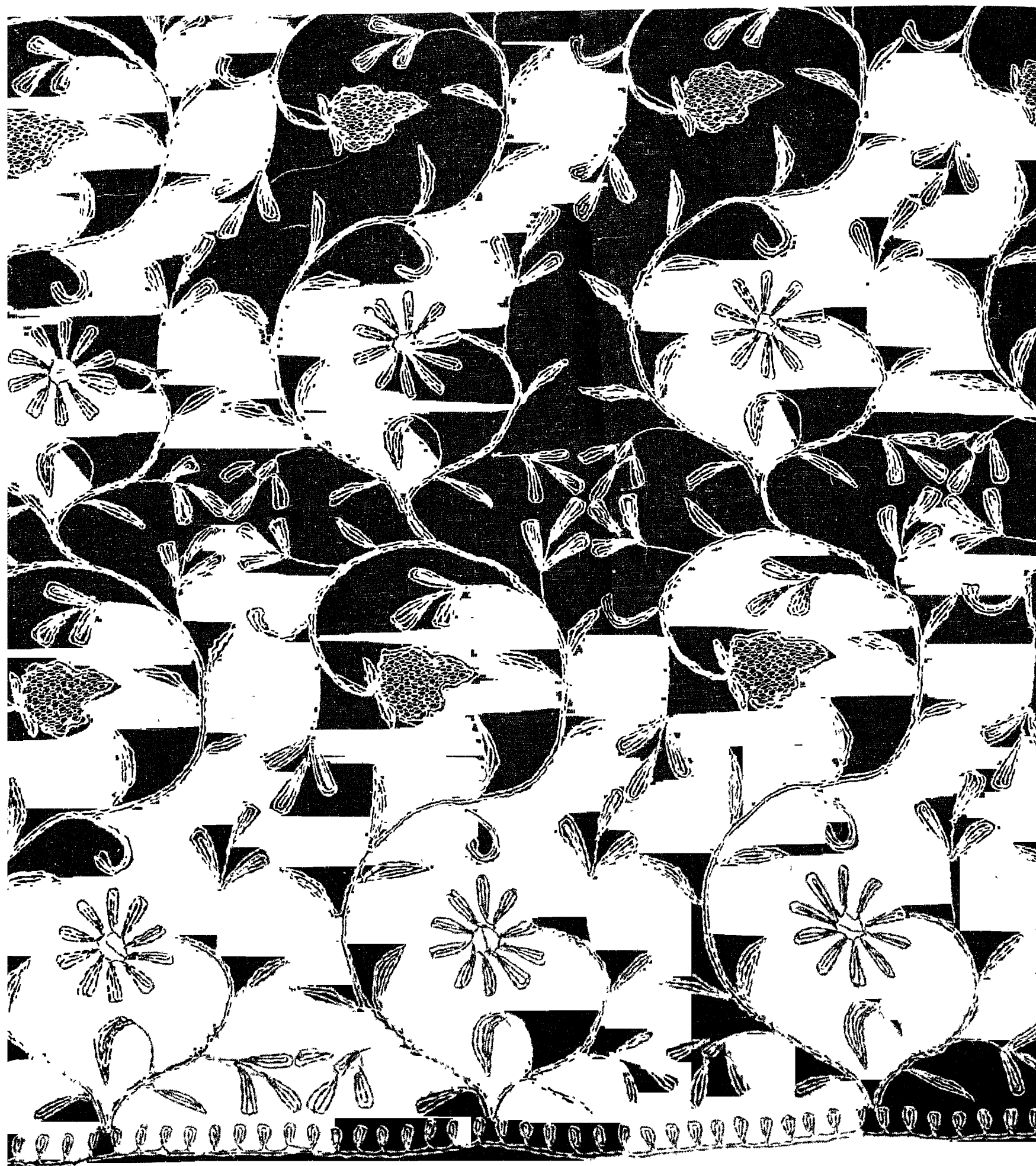
I have tasted nothing anywhere in India that has been as good as the namash from old Lucknow. Unlike the shahi galawat from the Akbari Gate end of Chowk, which surprises by melting wondrously in the mouth, the namash, sold by vendors at the Gol Darwaza, early every winter morning, stuns by its lightness on the tongue. Its colour is the most delicate shade of lemon, and its taste as subtle as a blend of the clearest, the lightest, most fragrant springtime flower honeys. The namash is all the lightness, won from loads of milk by hours of night-time labour, left out in the open for the pre-dawn winter dew to play upon. It is "shabnam's" child, Lucknow's "os ki rani"!

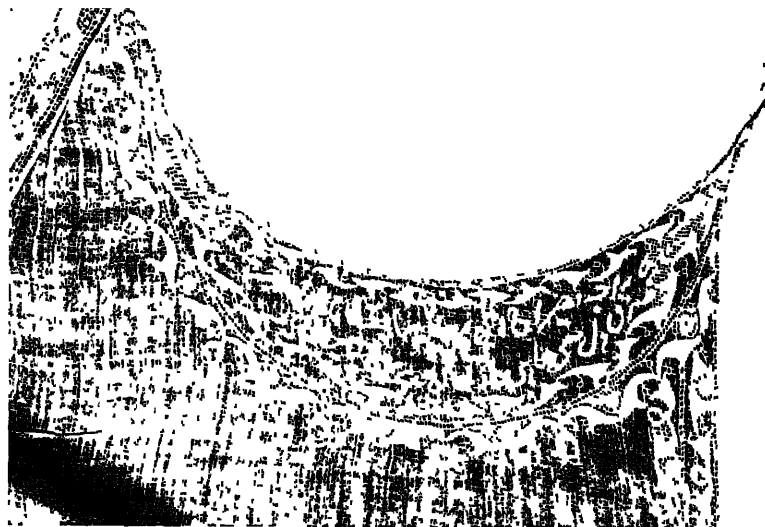
June is hardly the time for namash; nor was it possible for me to get my teeth into the halwa sohan especially the dark variety, another winter-time Lakhnawi delicacy from the main Chowk bazaar. But after many years, thanks to Professor Sharma, I did eat paan in Lucknow. Lucknow-wallahs, like Banarsis, love their paan, and they all have their own favourite paan sellers. Some, at least among the middle-classes, go only to Badri, others to the man near the State Bank of India, and yet others to the Gol Darwaza. But Lakhnawis seem to be quieter, less flamboyant about their paan and how it is to be eaten, than Banarsis. I find this mystifying because the desi desavari and the Mahoba pattas, the two most commonly eaten betel leaves in Lucknow, are inimitable in their own ways. For some unfathomable reason, Lucknow fails to give to its paans the mystical melt that the Banarsi paan possesses. But then, the peacock would be sickeningly proud if its voice too had been beautiful!



GLOSSARY

aalu k1 tikk1yan: potato cutlets	murg-mussallam. whole chicken carefully spiced and slowly cooked
adde-baaz regular	mutanjan sweetish mutton biryani
arvi ka salan: colocasia curry	namash: souffle-like mildly sweet and fluffy creamy delight
balai thick layer of fresh cream	nehari: beef/lamb trotters braised and then stewed overnight, further prepared in the morning and eaten with kulchas for breakfast
bawarchi cook	nehari khaas: special nehari
bawarchi tola: cooks’ quarters (in a town)	os k1 rani: “queen of dews”
biryani highly seasoned rice cooked with meat, fish, egg, or vegetables	paan: betel leaf with areca nut/other fillings/ spices, chewed as a delicacy
chaat: spicy vegetarian snack	patli kabab mincemeat kabab made in deep copper/brass vessel
chaatwala: chaat seller	puri: deep-fried puffy bread
chandi qalia: mutton curry in gravy mixed/topped with crushed edible silver leaves	parind puri: puri stuffed with a small live bird
daawat: feast	pista-badam k1 khichri. pistachio-almond rice preparation
dalthoth: savoury mixture	rabri: semi-liquid thickened milk sweet preparation
desi desavari a particular betel leaf	redhi: hand-drawn cart
dudhiya barfi. white, wet and firm milk sweet	samosa deep-fried potato/peas/meat-filled triangles of flour
galawat ke kabab kababs made from very finely ground, tenderized meat	seviyon ka muzaffar sweet vermicelli, fried and soaked in sugar syrup, with milk added; scatters when thrown on a plate
gilafi kulcha. very soft leavened bread	shab degh. a beautiful blend of whole turnips, mutton balls (koftas), and spices cooked in a deep pan overnight
gol gappa: puffed wafer, eaten with a spicy filling, in one mouthful	shabnam. morning dew
halwa sohan special sweet made with cereals, ghee, sugar, garnished with dried fruit	shahi galawat: “royal” papaya paste to tenderize meat
halwai: sweet-maker, seller	shami kabab: spherical mincemeat kabab
imarti. deep-fried ring of urad dal with a little wheat flour added, dipped in sugar syrup, more regular and elaborately shaped than a jalebi	sheermal: invented in Lucknow, a rich flat bread made of flour, milk, fat, and saffron
jalebi: syrup-filled deep-fried ring of flour	thandai: cooling spiced milk beverage
kabravali kacchori. deep-fried bread with filling made and sold at a shop by a grave in Aminabad	thela: cart
kaccha keema uncooked mince	tikki. cutlet
khaat: divan/stringed bed	tunde ke kabab / tunde ke shahi galawat ke kabab. kababs, made from very finely ground, delicately marinated, tenderized meat
korma mildly spiced dish of meat marinated in yoghurt	waraqui paratha: “layered” unleavened fried bread
kulcha: leavened bread	zaiqa: taste/flavour
kulfi: milk thickened, mixed with saffron, pistachios, etc and frozen into ice-cream	zarda pulao: sweet yellow rice coloured and flavoured with saffron
kundan qalia: mutton curry in gravy mixed/topped with crushed edible gold leaves	
Lakhnawi: language spoken in Lucknow/of Lucknow	
lal peda: milk thickened into chewy, flat, round sweets	
lassi: chilled frothed yoghurt drink	
Mahoba paan patta: tender/crisp betel leaves from the Mahoba district of Uttar Pradesh	
malai paan: triangular leaves of cream (paan-shaped) with a sweet filling	





## Arts and Crafts: Lucknow's Living Tradition

*Sudipta Dev*

For a city whose arts and crafts heritage has witnessed a chequered existence, those that have joined the list of extinct ones far exceed the few that have survived the times to emerge as living traditions. Whether it be Lucknow's once famous fish-design bidri-ware<sup>1</sup> which flourished during the nawabi era and disappeared with the fall of its patrons, zarbuland, the modified damascening on polished surfaces, or gold and silver plating,<sup>2</sup> or the glass-work industry, which was initiated by the celebrated artisans from Multan, all have vanished, leaving behind a few items in museums and private collections to prove their once-thriving existence. While horncraft and the miniature clay toy industry are at the brink of extinction, others like the sacred art of Islamic calligraphy, daraj (a variant of Lucknow applique work joined at the seams), the fish-scaled applique art tukri ka kaam, and traditional block printing, are all struggling hard for survival in hostile circumstances. It is only chikankari, the shahi kaam (royal work) or zardozi and kamdani, and bonecraft that have emerged as winners through the past century – the first because of its impact among the fashion cognoscenti and the rest all thanks to a burgeoning export market.

### Chikankari

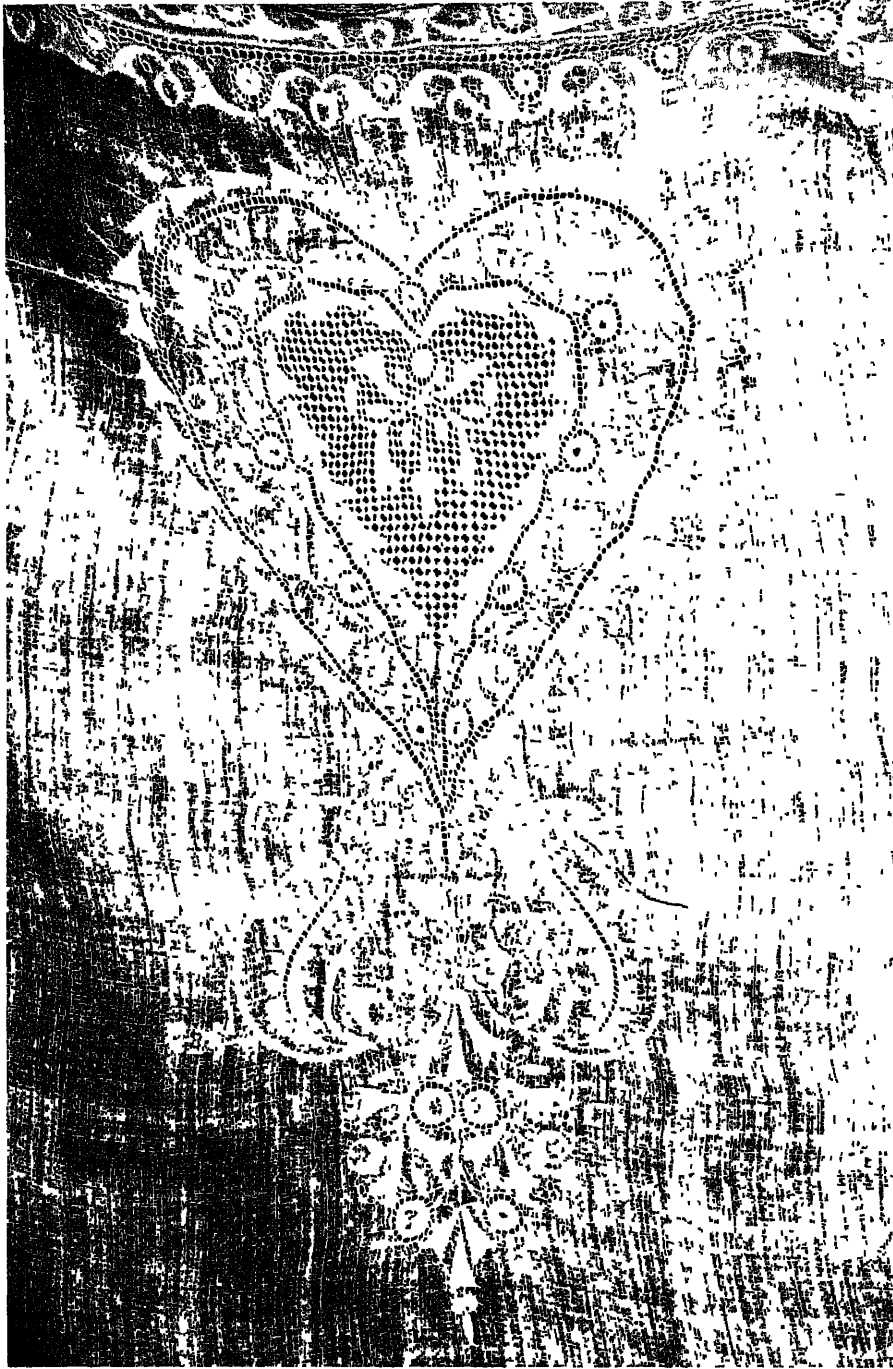
A craft which is synonymous with the name of Lucknow itself, chikankari also remains the city's single largest successful enterprise. A behemoth industry of sorts, behind its success is a silent and dedicated workforce of almost 80,000 women artisans, creating delicate wispy white embroidery of trailing tendrils. And there is none of course to dispute the fact that these fantasy gardens on gossamer fabric will perpetuate the memory of Lucknow's exotic heritage for all times to come.

#### *1 opposite*

Chikan work using tepchi stitch, from the collection of Runa Banerjee, SEWA.

#### *2 above*

Chikan work, including lettering, at the neck of an antique angarkha, from the collection of Nawab Jafar Mir Abdullah.



3  
Chikan work motif, from  
the collection of Nawab  
Jafar Mir Abdullah

Popular lore states that the origins of this craft of filigreed embroidery can be traced to the Mughal Empress Nur Jahan, who on a visit to Iran was so impressed by the beautiful motifs on the walls of the buildings there, that she ordered them to be copied through embroidery on her garments. Local craftswomen insist that it was her maid Begum Bismillah who brought the craft to Lucknow. There are others<sup>3</sup> who believe that chikankari was brought from Murshidabad by the wife or concubine of an early nawab, where it was already established as an art. She created an exquisite cap and presented it

to the nawab, and impressed with her endeavour, others in the harem followed suit to win special favours. With the passage of time, the craft went beyond the walls of the harem, reached the masses, and thrived as a trade. It is true that there is no concrete evidence for the fact that chikan came to Lucknow from Bengal;<sup>4</sup> the prevalent situation however lends some credence to the belief. Bengal at that time had a renowned textile tradition and probably the master artisans were invited and patronized by the Awadh nawabs. There was one significant difference between chikankari in Bengal and Lucknow. While the first evolved as a major item for trade, the latter was exclusive to royal clientele. Later, with the disappearance of nawabi patronage, the embroidery was revived as a product for trade, and the artisans were mainly womenfolk from the genteel class whose families were undergoing financial constraints. It was they who refined chikankari as a distinct craft of Lucknow, that remains till today.

Chikan products as currently found in the market are substandard substitutes for the real masterpieces produced by a few master artisans. From among the collection of 32 known chikan stitches, only six are in common use now – jali, hatkati, shadow, murri, phanda, and tepchi. The remaining stitches, all named, are no longer used, and are found only on old chikan-work garments in private collections. What makes chikankari such a distinctive needlecraft is that it is the only embroidery in the world which is so special in its discipline, that each stitch is only used for one purpose.<sup>5</sup>

A masterful speciality, anokhi chikan is unique in that the embroidery is done in such a way that the thread does not show on the reverse of the fabric. The innovator, Hasan Mirza (1902–80) belonging to a family of hereditary craftsmen, created this inimitable technique in the 1950s. Given the National Award by the President of India



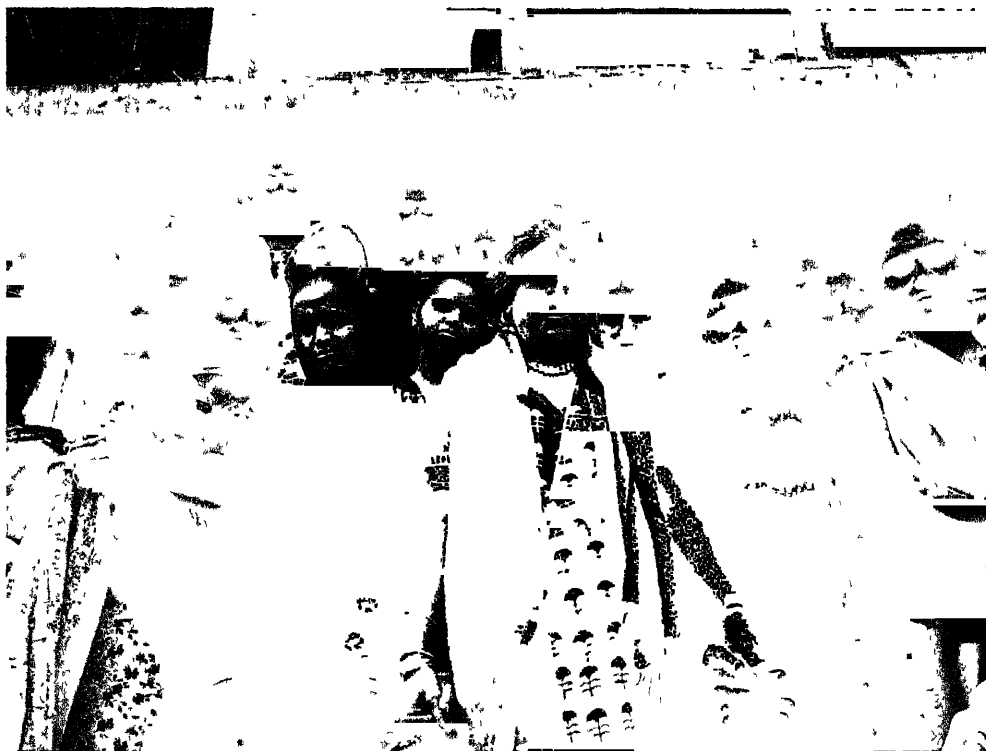
4

Award-winning SEWA  
craftsperson Nasreen  
Siddiqui working on  
chikankari fish design  
typical of Awadh.



5

Runa Banerjee, founder  
of SEWA Lucknow with  
SEWA workers.



in 1968, till today anokhi chikan is a skill known to only a few select members of the family – his daughters Akhtar Jehan Begum, Rehana Begum, and Naseem Bano, themselves holders of the National Award. Rehana Begum reminds us that the times are now very different from the days of her grandfather, Mohammed Mirza, another illustrious name in the annals of the craft, when well known artisans were mostly men and chikan karkhanas (workshops) were in existence.

The remuneration then for the creation of one exclusive angarkha for a member of royalty was enough to feed the whole family for a year. The 200-odd master artisans today who know only how to make beautiful white needlecraft, have neither the guile of businessmen nor



the resources to tackle corruption in the government agencies set up to look after their welfare. In fact SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association), an autonomous association of chikan workers was established in 1984 as a follow-up to a project that revealed how women and children working in the chikan industry suffered from more exploitation than any other craft in the unorganized sector. While setting about to change the fate of thousands of craftswomen, freeing them from the clutches of moneylenders, SEWA also brought chikan to the fore of modern fashion. Variants of chogas, jamas, and angarkhas have been created, combining traditional craft with modern chic. Haute couture has finally arrived with its own distinctive Lakhnawi flavour.

silver threads, on velvet and silk, evoking the nostalgia of an exotic past – of nawabs and nobility, court life and courtesans. Not surprisingly even today every zardozi (zardozi artisan) proudly claims to be the practitioner of shahi kam. The pride of the craftsmen is incidentally not just confined to the craft's true-blue status but its origins as well. Most city craftsmen claim that its genesis can be traced back to the times of the early prophets. Hazrat Yusuf is believed to be the inventor when he decorated his aba (robe) in a similar style.

Zardozi was a popular fashion of the nawabi era, albeit only amongst the nobility of course. The reason is not difficult to guess – pure gold and silver threads were used, while precious stones and crystals embellished the patterns. It was therefore a luxury that only a privileged few could afford.

In the old days elaborate motifs ornamented the royal crowns and khillat (the ceremonial dress), the masnad (royal dais), the bolster and pillow were also

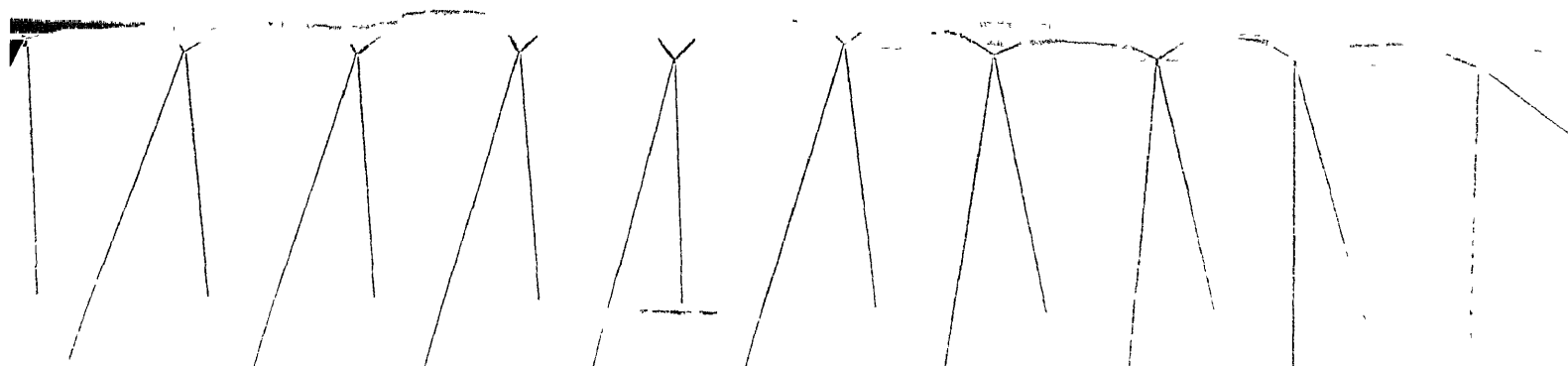
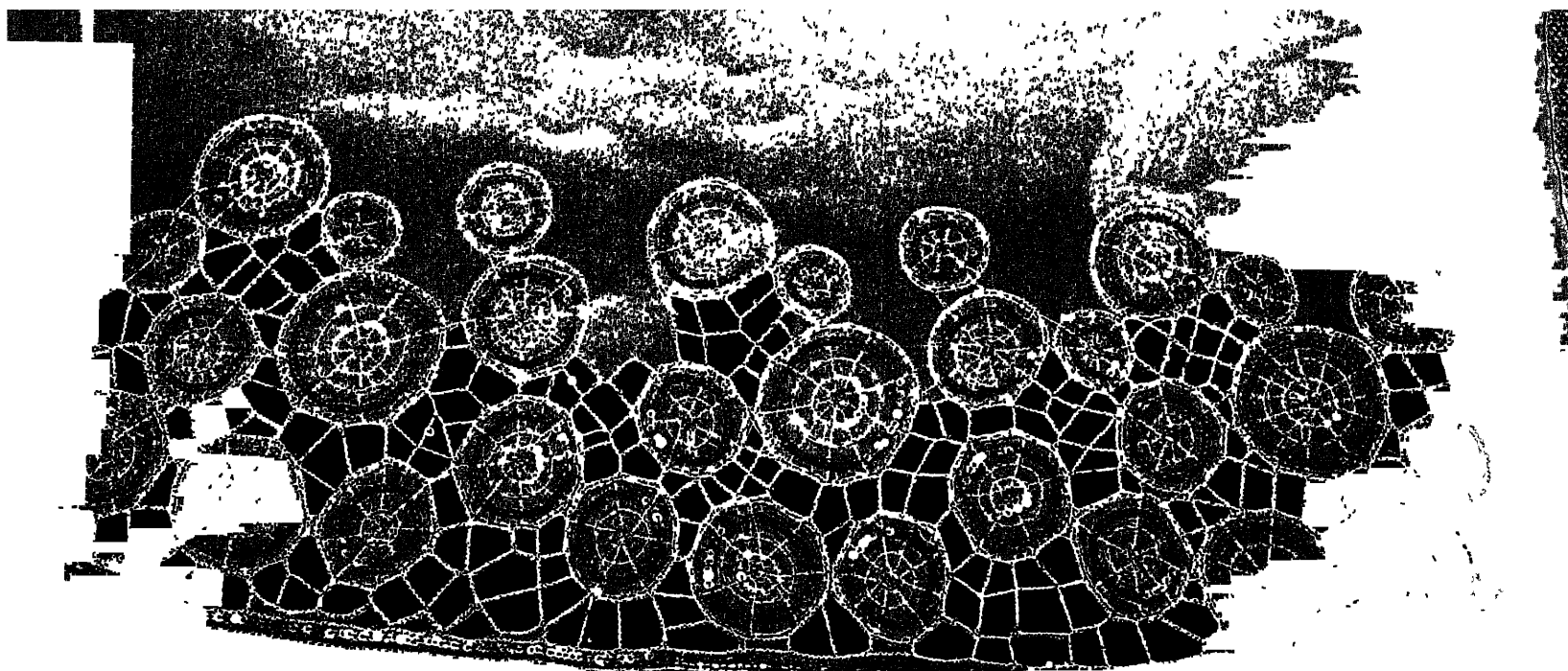
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Zardozi workers in the old city of Lucknow, working on the karchob (frame on which the fabric is stretched).

### The Royal Art of Zardozi and Kamdani

It is not merely a needlecraft but a vestige of an opulent bygone era. An embroidered extravaganza in gold and





crafted with ostentatious motifs. And so were the shamianas (canopies) and the royal tent fittings. Much in demand by the nobility were the crafted horse saddles and elephant howdas. Patka (the cloth decorating the alams, or standards) and fareras (flags) are seen today decorated with ornate finesse for the Muharram processions. Curtains for the imambaras and veils for the shrines or mazars are also included in the list of zardozi items.

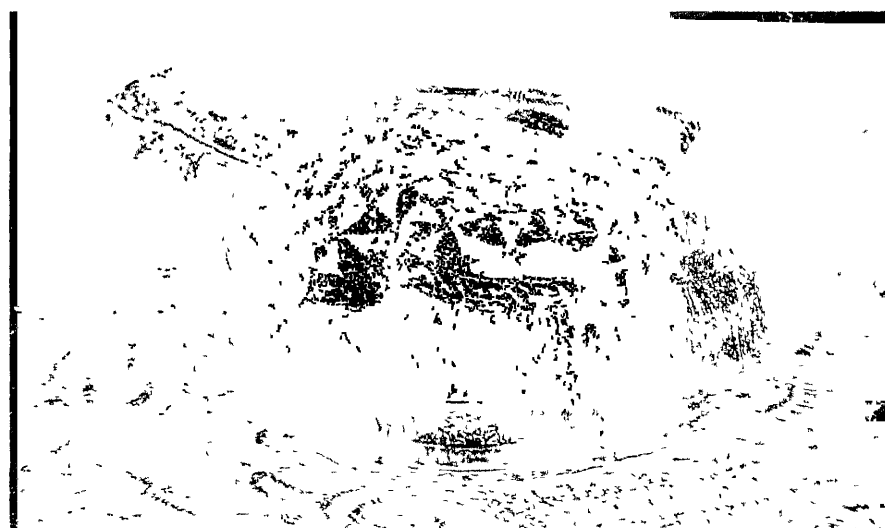
With the end of the feudal era, this craft patronized by the very rich also vanished, as common people could not indulge in such extravagance. Today, on the contrary, the zardozi industry is thriving as never before, due to its resurgence on the fashion scene and the boom in exports. The pure gold and silver threads are now replaced with steel or copper wire and silk thread. Gems and precious stones have been substituted by

beads and sequins. Other ornamental materials are salma (twisted wire), dapka (straight wire), dori (gold and silver cords), powdered beads, glass bangle pieces, and even shells and mirrors.

Lucknow has been the breeding ground for some of the best zardozi artisans in the country. Presently the city has tens of thousands of them, working

7  
Zardozi work in net pattern at a workshop in Hussainabad.

8  
A hand-stitched paandaan cover of tukri work with gold and silver zardozi over it, from the collection of Nawab Jafar Mir Abdullah.



in countless workshops that dot the old city lanes. Embroidered saris, suits, dupattas, and lehngas produced here have markets all over the country with the principal wholesale market being Mumbai, the centre of the export trade.

The garments for the export market obviously differ from the internal demands. Jackets, shirts, long skirts, and longer scarves are the most sought after items by customers in America, Britain, France, and West Asia. The migration of workers to karkhanas in Saudi Arabia and Dubai has also become common.

Fabrics range from tussore and banarsi silk, to lighter materials like organza and chiffon. Recently, aari work, a variant of zardozi, has become very popular. It is believed to be the invention of a local craftsman Chote Sahib Banarsi in the 1940s. The demand for aari has increased in the Gulf states and the West. The difference between the

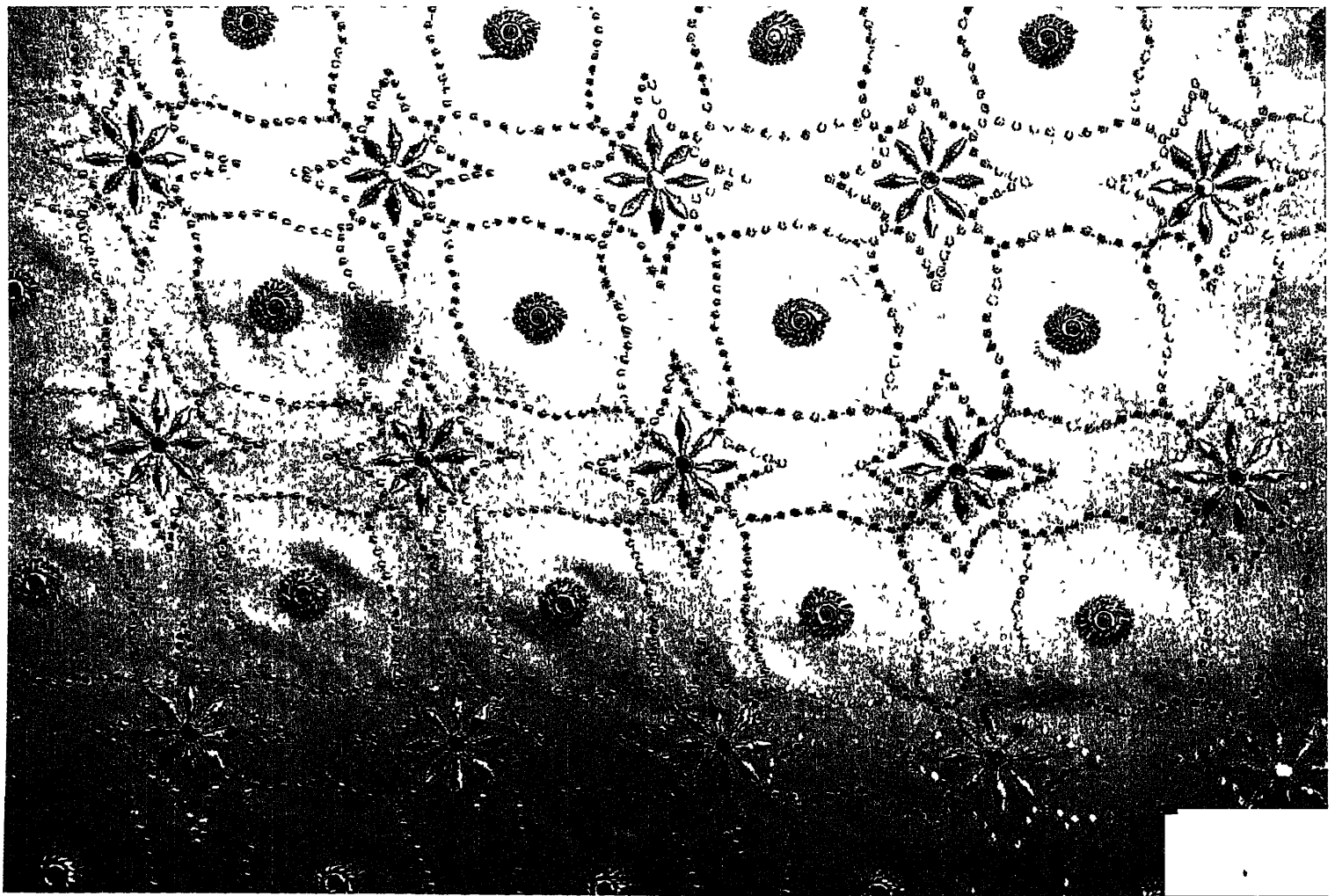
two crafts stems from the type of needle used and the method of holding it. After fixing the cloth in the wooden frame, the embroidery is started. An ordinary needle is used for zardozi and the stitches are made in a simple manner. The needle-point is turned inwards and the wooden handle or muthia is fixed at the other end. In aari, the thread is passed below the cloth and pulled by the hooked needle from above the fabric.

Designs include both traditional and new patterns and sometimes a hybrid of both. Patterns are either copied from decades-old styles or new ones are made to suit the market's demands. For the factory owners it is an arduous task to keep creating something new almost every three months to keep up with changing fashion trends.

The flourishing business notwithstanding, life remains difficult for an average craftsman. It is a profession in which the retirement age comes a bit too

9 a,b,c

Examples of kamdani work with classical as well as modern motifs, finished at the workshop of Mr Abdullah at Dargah Hazrat Abbas.



early – at 45 to be precise. For more than 70,000 zardozi workers in the city there is only one thought that haunts the mind – eyesight failure. But it is an occupational hazard they have to live with and eventually encounter. Continuous straining of eyes crafting delicate embroidery on chalk mark patterns takes its toll over the years. The nafri (daily wage) rate is also reduced with age and the use of spectacles renders a worker useless. Jobless in his early forties the worker has no other option but to depend on his young sons to leave school and start working in zardozi factories to feed the hungry mouths at home. For thousands of children between the ages of five and fifteen, the darting needle of the zardozi art becomes the only means of their family’s survival. While a tradition is kept alive and a craft thrives, it is a circle of poverty that continues down the craftsmen’s lineage.

Kamdani is a craft that captures the mystique of the starlit sky – twinkling in a sheer chiffon sari or a gauzy net dupatta. The shimmering silver spangles of kamdani also epitomize best the quintessential Lakhnawi nafasat (finesse) and nazakat (delicacy); whether it be the simple silver dots or intricate floral motifs, the effect remains inimitable exquisiteness.

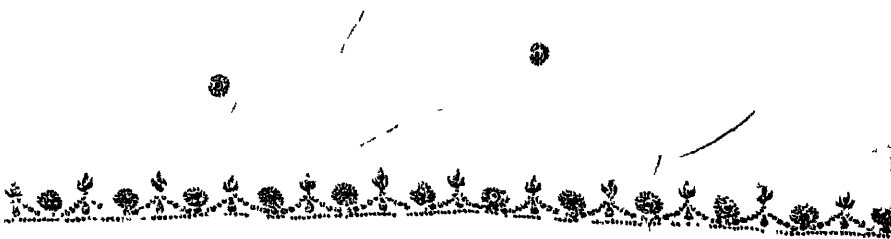
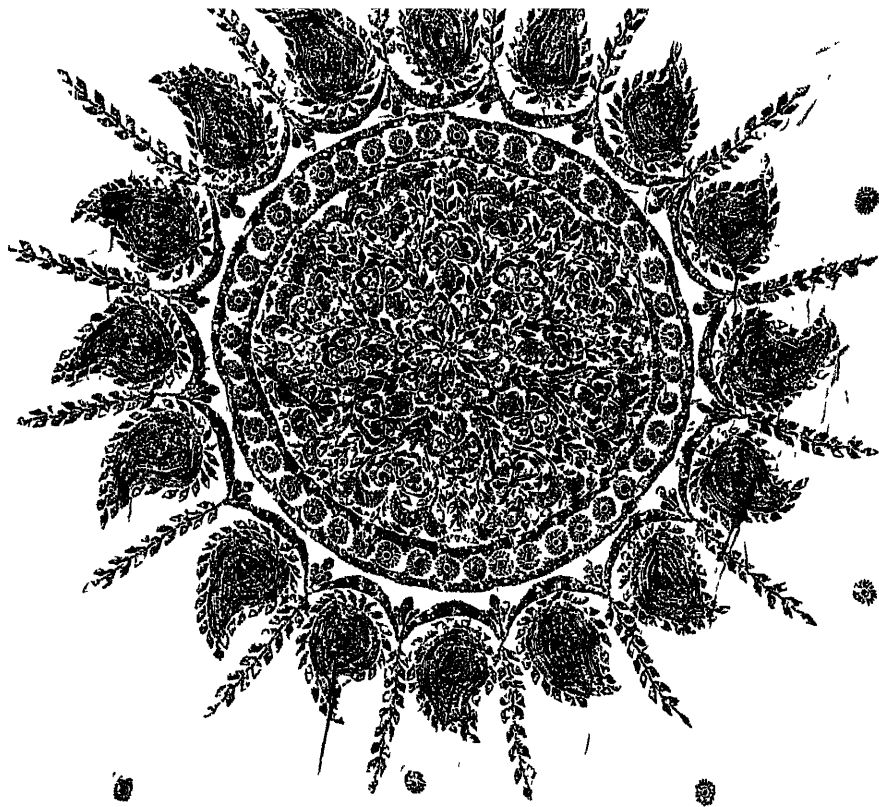
The actual origins of the craft, popularly known as muqqaish, are shrouded in antiquity. Its recent resurgence can be traced to the times of the Awadh nawabs. That era witnessed the proliferation and perfection of the craft to such an extent that even today with zardozi, kamdani is classed as shahi kam. In the past, pure gold and silver wires wove exquisite patterns on thin muslin cloth, while today the silvery glint comes from enamelling. Chiffon is considered the best material which accentuates the starry magic. Almost a dead craft in the 1970s, it was given a new life on the fashion scene. There are no dearth of orders today for the crafts-



women from private clients or shops in Parche Wali Gali in Chowk Sarafa as well as the upmarket showrooms in town. It is a different matter altogether that the remittance paid is abysmally low.

The badla (silver-coated aluminium wire) is attached to the thread of a needle. As the needle passes through the cloth, tightened around the finger, the succeeding folds of the wire on the cloth make the knot or buti. A minimum of three folds is needed for teen sui ki fardi (three-thread knots). By increasing the number of wire folds, the size of the knots also increases. Commonly the largest ones are not more than six fardis. The folds are rubbed with a cowrie shell for deeper embedding in the cloth. Significantly, it has always been the simple spangles that have been the most popular kamdani designs down the ages

9b



9c



10  
Aqueel Agah, over 65  
years of age, works on  
kamdani at the workshop  
of Mr Abdullah.

and continue to be in vogue. The dots vary from simple shimmering stars to denser constellations. Minute ones join to form exquisite patterns. The most commonly found ones flooding the markets are floral butis, kairis (mango-shaped design), and leafy vines. Heavier works carry richer designs – figures of peacocks with wide plumes and dainty fishes.

The other better known stitches are karanphool (straight-line flower, with a close resemblance to an asterisk mark), mundaphool (petalled flower), patta (leaf), and ring designs. Incidentally all the 32 stitches of chikankari can be done on kamdani, the reason why the craft is known as “gold and silver chikankari work”. In fact if you ever happen to encounter an artisan the first thing that will be pointed out to you will be the superiority of the craft over chikankari. And why? Obviously because making aluminium wire stitches on cloth requires a more strenuous effort than simple cotton threads. While silver badla is mostly used, gold and multicoloured threads creating exotic patterns are a rarity. The needlework is first done on white chiffon and later the cloth is dyed to the desired shade, the colour of the wires unaffected by the dyeing process.

Kamdani’s similarity with chikankari is not just in the stitches, but the craftspeople as well. Both the crafts are domains of women artisans. The city today has no more than twenty-odd male artisans – mostly all above the age of fifty, the last generation left in trade who have actually mastered the craft well and know how to create fancier designs. There are very few women artisans who know the intricacies of the craft. The reason why chikankari and kamdani are practised almost exclusively by women is also obvious. In the distant past, kamdani, like zardozi, was exclusive to craftsmen, but the gradual decline in demand led to wages in pittance. As an almost dead craft two decades ago, it was taken up by

women to increase their family income. After the day's work is over, nimble fingers start crafting silvery magic on cloth, in thousands of homes in the narrow alleys of Chowk, Kashmiri Mohalla, Chaupatiyan, and Bajaza. However, for the 10,000 craftswomen residing in these old localities of the city, kamdani is no romance of the night sky, but their only source for keeping the kitchen fires burning.

### Bonecraft

Lucknow with its centuries old ivory craft legacy is one of the country's major bonecraft export centres. The 300 craftsmen in the city however continue to bemoan the end of the "ivory era". With the ban on ivory and the end of quotas from the government, the artisans have switched over from giving smooth ivory surfaces an ornate finish, to creating masterpieces from camel and buffalo bone. With the subsequent rise in exports, bonecraft has graduated from a marginal status to a major craft today. Even though the techniques and the craftsmen of ivory and bone are the same, the most significant difference remains – the price tag.

Interestingly, most of the city's craftsmen boast of a common ancestry. Feeldandane saaz (ivory craft), they say, was brought to Lucknow by their forefathers about three centuries back. The family of the legendary master-craftsman, Abdul Khalid, has been engaged in ivory craft for the last 750 years. It was his ancestors from Lahore who brought the craft to its major centres in northern India. More than 300 years ago, three ivory artisans from the family left Lahore together. One set up business in Delhi, another settled in Benares, while the third introduced the craft in Awadh's capital. The succeeding generations of craftsmen perfected ivory craft in the three cities where they had migrated. Ivory was used for producing decorative pieces, including the legs for charpoys, chess pieces, knives,

buttons, and bric-a-brac.<sup>6</sup> Today it is believed that all the major craftsmen in Delhi and Lucknow belong to this very family. The eleventh generation still continues the trade, producing standard items for an export market.

The main attraction for export is jewellery, including fancy bone earrings, necklaces, bracelets studded with stones, silver-white metals, and glass beads

11  
Master craftsman  
Mohammad Naseem  
working on camel bone

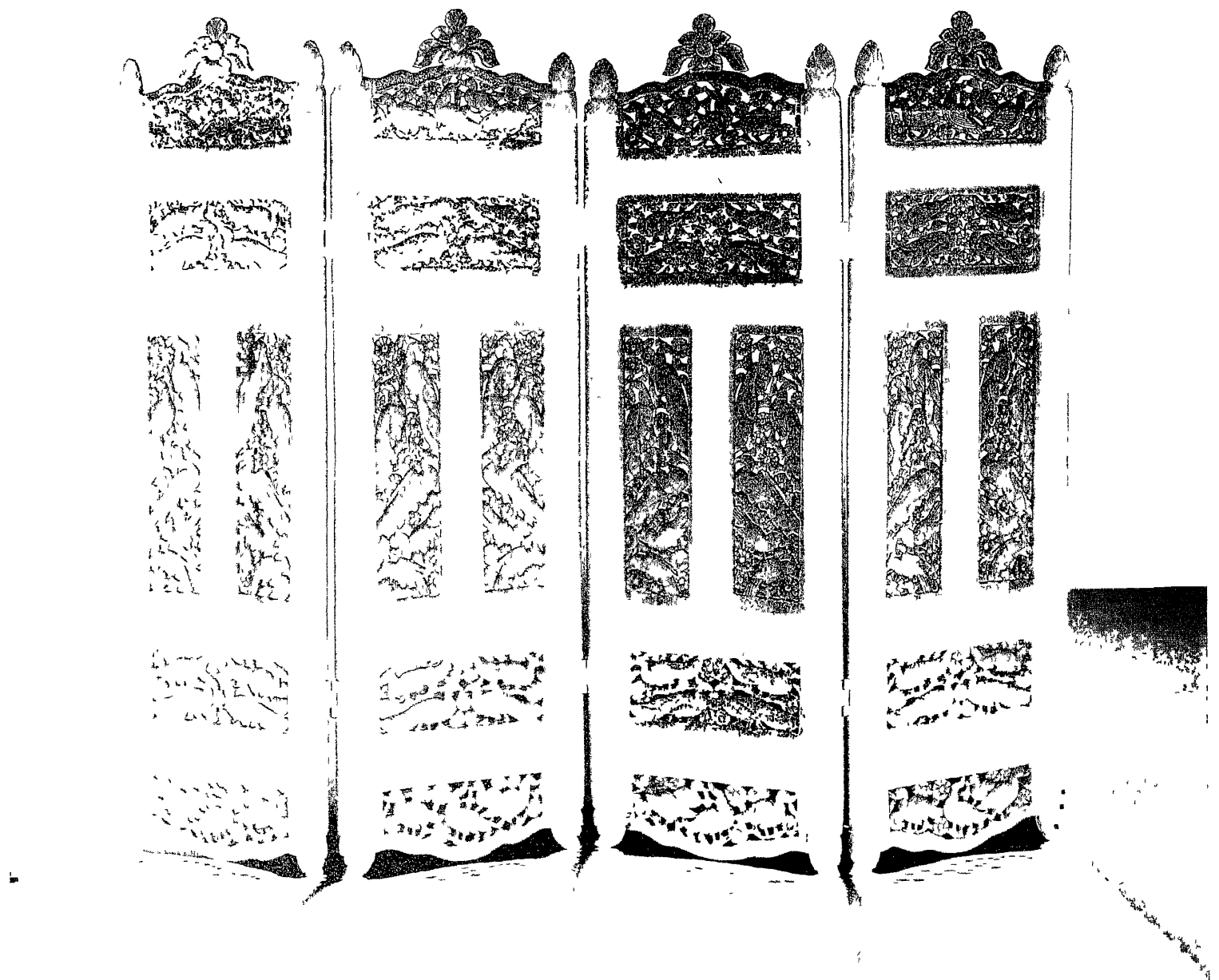






12  
Mohammad Wasim,  
senior craftsman and  
state awardee,  
displaying his work.

13  
Award-winning bone  
carved screen by  
Mohammad Nadeem, son of  
Mohammad Wasim.



adding a contemporary touch. The bonecrafted Taj Mahal is yet another coveted export item, with tiny red and green bulbs attached. Bone beads are mostly exported to Britain, America, and France. Crafted in thousands of patterns these are used in ornaments, dresses, and curtains.

Lucknow's speciality is jali work which fails to find the same perfection elsewhere. Although Delhi is the major exporting centre, with an abundance of machine-made products, handcrafted items are all from Lucknow. Decorated artefacts include beautifully crafted boxes, table decorations, maps, and screens. Floral tracteries and shikargah (hunting) scenes are the most popular designs. The city's famous jali work usually has floral motifs or living figures set against a background of delicate lattice.

Camel and buffalo being the basic raw materials, the former with its "ivory-like" finish is generally used for export, while cheaper buffalo bone goods are sold in the local markets. Converting bones into an artefact requires great skill and effort. It is first cleaned and cut according to the shape required, next carving is done followed by intricate jali work. The bone is then dipped in hydrogen peroxide solution for the "ivory white" effect. Then follows the final finish. Hereditary craftsmen claim that even the masala mixed with glue for the joints is an inherited family secret.

Very often the artisans get a chance to try their skills again on ivory, when they are given antique masterpieces for repair. Though standard items are produced for the market by most of them, it is only a select few who have the ability to create an objet d'art. They have to put in the same effort as for ivory, but are not paid even one-tenth the price. Also, not all their products are bought by middlemen, with stringent selection leading to waste of labour. Consequently while bonecraft has emerged from its marginal status the



craftsmen continue to lead a precarious existence, a common fate shared by all the artisans of Lucknow's most flourishing craft industries.

14  
Bone carvings by members of Mohammad Wasim's family.

#### NOTES

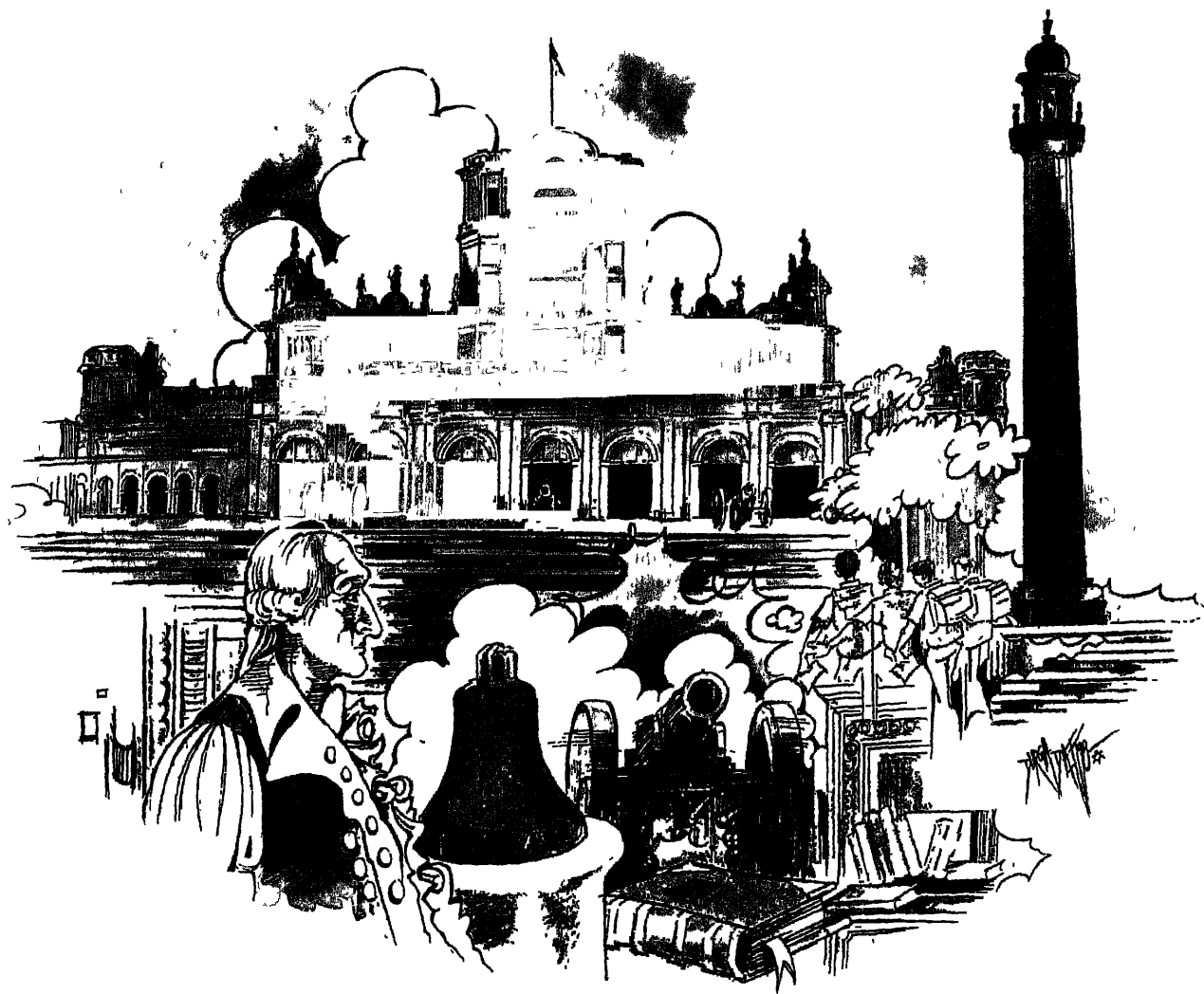
1. "Bidriware", illustrated catalogue, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, 1961, p. 14.
2. George C.M. Birdwood, *The Industrial Arts of India*, London, 1880, p. 150
3. Amir Hasan, *Palace Culture of Lucknow*, Delhi, 1983, p. 172.
4. Sheila Paine, *Chikan embroidery the floral whitework of India*, UK, 1989, p. 26.
5. Paine, p. 35.
6. Ashfaq Ahmad Khan, *Glances of the Arts of Awadh*, Lucknow, 1989, p. 21.

GLOSSARY OF CRAFTS

aari: a popular variant of zardozi embroidery	karkhana: workshop
alam standard	khullat ceremonial dress
angarkha: jacket	lehanga long skirt
anokhi chikan: special chikan in which the thread does not show on the reverse	mundaphool: petalled flower
badla thin silver-coated wire	muqqaish. gold or silver thread embroidery
bidri: mixed metal with silver inlay	murri rice-shaped stitches like French knots, similar to phanda
buti: embroidered flower	nafasat finesse
chikan. white embroidery on muslin	nazakat. delicacy
chikankari chikan work	patka cloth decorating the alam
chogas: long coats	patta: leaf
dapka straight wire embroidery	phanda: millet-shaped stitches used to make flower and grapevine patterns
daraj: applique work	salma twisted wire embroidery
dori: gold and silver cords	shahi kam: "royal work", done for rulers
feeldandane saaz: ivory craft	shamiana: awning or canopy
hatkati: a running jali, in a straight line, normally at the seams	teen sui ki fardi: three-thread knots
jali: lattice work	tepchi: stem stitch used for outlines
jama: jacket	tukri ka kaam. applique work in geometrical patterns
kairi: mango-shaped design	zarbuland: damascening
kamdani. embroidery with gold or silver threads	zardozi. embroidery with metal threads
karanphool: straight-line flower	
karchob. wooden frame on which the fabric is tightly stretched and tied with string	



# SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS





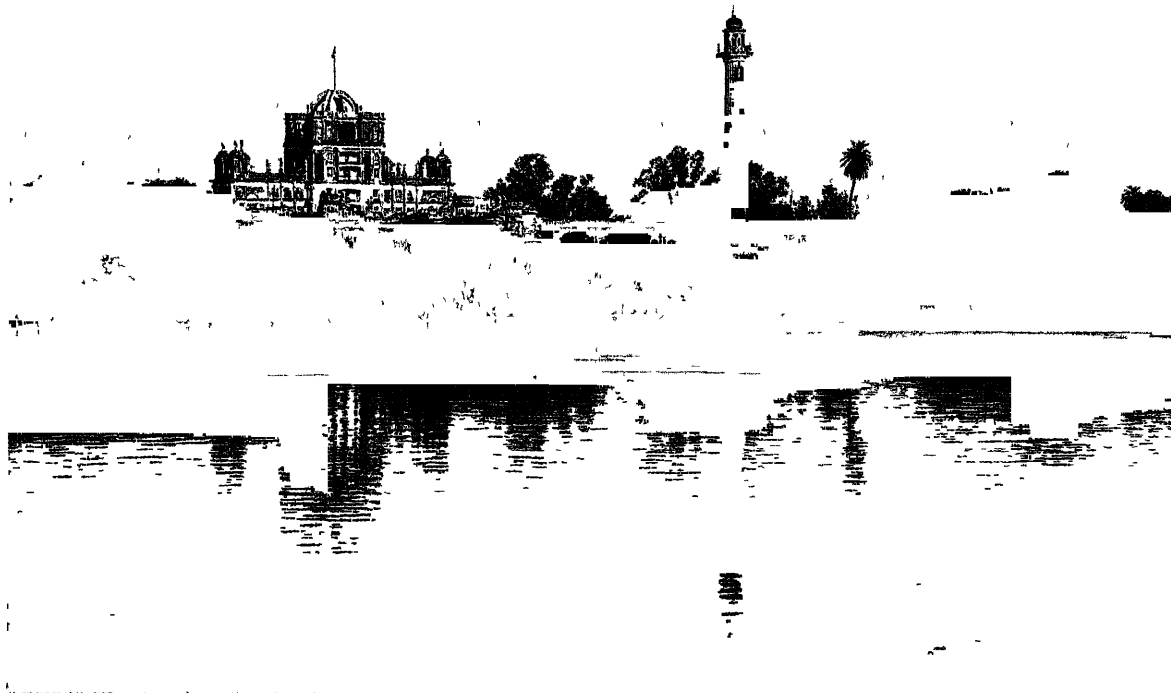
# A Journey through Lucknow's Schools and Colleges

*Ian Shepherd*

There are twelve schools shown on an illustrated map of Lucknow of 1920. From the oldest, La Martiniere in the east, to Colvin Taluqdars College and Canning College in the north. Eighty-odd years later, over eighty known institutions and their branches dot the city. City Montessori School, from a few benches and pupils to “an empire”. From an institution in a 1911 arched structure in Aminabad, guided by an Iraqi-born woman, to the “mushrooming of teaching shops”. In all quarters of the growing place, countless coaching and computer classes are turning Lucknow into a centre of learning and business. The uneducated, *para-likha nahin*, are being consigned to the tribe of the dispensable.

The “American Center for Languages” with “a crash course in old and latest American slang” will balance the tilt of middle-aged persons fluent in “the Queen’s English” who say that they know more of the Christian gospels of Matthew and Luke, than their own scriptures. Stratford on Newal Kishore Road has a well-planned course in English for its students. We have the “Step-In” (pre-nursery), no uniform, no bags, and horseriding included, with the school as the host for the day, providing meals to the pupils. It is situated a little way from La Martiniere Girls School (the erstwhile Khurshid Manzil), near La Place, on Shahnajaf Road. Educating a child in Lucknow can be an expensive venture with parents incurring an outlay of Rs 5–10 lakhs up to Class 10. Compare this with an advertisement in *The Pioneer* of 1870, where a month’s fee for a La Martiniere boarder was Rs 16.





2

La Martiniere College  
from the river, with the  
Lat on the right.

Many of the schools and colleges here were set up by individuals – the government is a newcomer in providing education. And many of these individuals were from Anglo-Indian families, with long Lucknow connections. St Bernadette's School in Victoria Street (now Tulsi Das Marg) in Nakkhas was opened by the Queiros family, whose Spanish ancestor, Joseph Queiros, worked for Major General Claude Martin in the 1780s. St Mary's School, near the Banarsi Bagh Zoo, in the eastern part of the city, was established by the Keelor family, who were also connected with La Martiniere School. St Teresa's School now has a College branch in the southern part of the city with its Principal P.A.J. Lewis having to contend with 43 schools in the area. St Teresa's was founded in 1968 by the Fanthome family, now described as "a great tribe of Fanthomes", who entered India in the 18th century. While St Teresa's is flourishing in Model House, both St Bernadette's and St Mary's, who stirred the educational spirit in the hearts of the less affluent and most traditionally-minded families, have closed down.

Other public-spirited founders include a Lucknow University lecturer, later professor, Raj Bisaria, who, in the tradition of the Shakespearian theatre companies touring India between the 1880s and the 1930s, gave the city its own Theatre Arts Workshop. On the Chaupatiyan road, after passing the Chowk's famous Gol Darwaza, the kulfi-sellers, the "human hive" of inhabitants, silversmiths, goldsmiths, embroiderers, I can hear the "thump, thump" of silver being beaten into foil, the sawing and hammering of carpenters and blacksmiths, and I stand in front of "Happy Hours" where the dream of the sports-lover Satish Chandra Shah from Nainital, turned into reality in 1972, with 2,500 students and a college. In Nakkhas, where on Sundays a market takes place for those in search of cheap goods, rare books, and antiques, one can also see the old gate of St John's School. Here, behind inspiring rounded pillars, students of this co-educational institution of many decades come in search of knowledge.

Unity College, founded by Dr S. Kalbe Sadiq in 1988, with just 27 students, now has over 1,700. M. Naqvi,

a member of the staff, takes me down history lane to the Battle of Plassey and, rolling his eyes, gives the imaginary hammer of knowledge a beating with “ignorance is the great leveller”. The huge Jama Masjid with its two lofty minarets and three cupolas, and lavishly ornamented in stucco, stands by the college. This side of the city is thick with ruins, graceful lantern-topped minarets, monuments, kohl-eyed damsels in burqas, modern-day “nawabs”, and an air of over two hundred years ago.

### La Martiniere

Our survey starts with the oldest and best known school, La Martiniere College (figures 1–3). When it opened in 1845 there were few schools in this city except for the madrassas (Muslim religious schools), although sixteen European teachers are listed in the East India Company records between 1775 and 1856. The school was made possible according to the will and wishes of Major General Claude Martin (1735–1800) who designed and built Constantia as his country house (he is buried here). “Constructed in an extraordinary mixture of styles”, the fields are vast and “the site chosen is a lovely park which might excite the envy of any educational establishment in the world”.

There is a tinkling of bells as cattle feed in the field. I pass Muslim and Christian graves of 1857–58 victims and a “mausoleum to General Martin’s Indian wife”. There’s also a freshly painted pillar box. An illustration of another Lucknow in a century gone by. A man dressed in a bottle-green suit twirling a stick calls out to another, to tell him he’s being called mad. The sun is not hot, so what can the answer be? – “Yes, I have gone mad.” Farther away, a similarly dressed man, also with a stick, gives chase to retreating boys from the large tamarind trees and up the embankment near the Lat, the pillar memorial built under the terms of Claude Martin’s will.

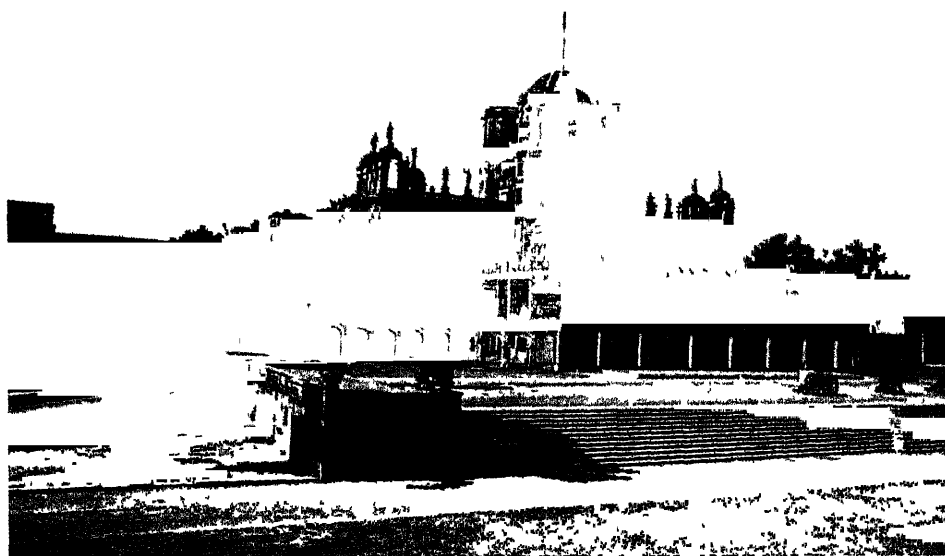
Invectives are exchanged and they cross to the other side. The villagers at the top are also having a verbal battle with someone below, near the lake, originally much smaller and enlarged in the late-19th century as a famine-relief measure. A motorcyclist gets off and hitches his bike onto its stand. A meeting spot even Claude Martin never imagined.

An Australian stops in her tracks to see this “stupendous” building rise up before her eyes. All her father’s stories of his 1890s/1900s Martiniere days and the steps leading up to the podium on which the building stands could not prepare her for this unusual experience. From the bench outside the bursar’s office, I see the Lat rise into the sky. How many arms will it take to encircle its base? I think of the massive walls, the green-painted doors, statues surveying the land beyond. In pictures and on television, these rooftop lifelike figures appear on historical buildings in Europe. A pair of birds fly away from the Lat’s pinnacle which Ralph Weir climbed, the first and last principal to do so.

A file of ten chaprasis, peons in khaki uniform file by, stopping by the bursar’s door, “Salaam sahib”, smile at one another, and go back the way they

3

La Martiniere College, front elevation  
Photograph from the collection of Rosie Llewellyn-Jones.



have come, except for one who is called in. The bursar asks him to show me the chapel. The door is unlocked and we are inside. The sound of a broom in the wings. There are stained-glass windows and the ceiling has a French-like, white-green and light maroon Easter egg and flattened marzipan appearance. On the side walls are several tablets to the memory of former principals and one to William Jones, an 1859–66 pupil who died at sea.

The chaprasi stands with a resigned attitude in a pew, then looks at his watch and leads me through a side-door. “You want to go down?” and before I can answer, he leads me down a small flight of stairs. “Mind your head”, and another flight, orchestrated by the sound of blind mice coming from squarish openings of darkness in the walls. And another, electric bulbs lighting the way. We have reached the main chamber. A man is sweeping the floor, a metal gate is open to an alcove and in its centre is a near chest-high marble-topped tomb with a

brief inscription in black letters of the founder Claude Martin. My guide looks at me as if to say “Here’s something more than what you saw above.”

It’s 3 pm and the outside air has a wintry warmth. A group of visitors pose to be photographed before the bronze cannon and brass bell cast by Claude Martin in his Lucknow foundry in 1786. Near the historic steps with initials of generations of past students carved on them – J. Green 1891, W. Hollands 1908, De la Hoyde 1949, M. Lyons (no date). The 1960s weekend picture shows, the projector, the white screen, “The FBI story”, “PT-109”. Below these steps outdoor picture shows from a 16mm projector would be held with Frank D’Souza in charge. The twinkling stars, the beautiful night, the lake, and the silent sentinel, the Lat. Here in the night, amidst trees, fireflies, the shaking of the ground as the train whistled past, also the boxers from Dr Graham’s Homes, Kalimpong fought it out with their opponents from La Martiniere.

Some former senior teachers and students are recalled, who seemed to blend with the thick walls of the Constantia itself. Frank D’Souza, a teacher who had also studied here, his many-shaped walking sticks in their stands, his photography club, and his blue-suited figure with cap, by rickshaw to church in Hazratganj and the Narhi market for his curds, jalebis, and gulab jamuns. Denzil D’Gama and his carpentry lessons. Former students A. Lunn who came to celebrate a college reunion, to return no more, and Adrian Daniel-Palmer dying in faraway Oman.

#### La Martiniere Girls

The Lucknow Girls School founded by Mrs Abott in 1868 moved from the Moti Mahal to the Khurshid Manzil (House of the Sun) in 1876, and became known as La Martiniere Girls School (figure 4). Built between 1800 and 1810 by Saadat Ali Khan for one of his

4

La Martiniere Girls School.



favourite wives Khurshid Zadi, it consisted of a two-storeyed building “with six turrets at irregular intervals around its four entrances and drawbridges over the moat believed to be connected to the Gomti”. I am standing near the moat as it’s turning dusk. I look up at the turret, I can smell the scent of joss sticks and herbs. I can almost see a figure in the opening above, hear the tinkling of ankletbells and laughter.

The place became famous as the 32nd Mess House when it was “occupied by the officers of the regiment” in 1856, and was “the scene of sharp fighting” in 1857. For six hours it was pounded by Peel’s Naval Brigade. There is a pillar in the college which commemorates this, as does a famous painting by J. Jones Barker which records the meeting of General Havelock, Sir James Outram, and Sir Colin Campbell on November 17, 1857 in the Khurshid Manzil, in the second relief of Lucknow. “Spacious halls for classrooms” and “wide verandahs skirt lofty rooms” with “dormitories above” where teacher turned writer Esther Mary Lyons and student turned writer Attia Hosain must have treaded in years gone by.

“Expressly designed for women in purdah” the College can be approached from two sides: the western one near the K.D. Singh “babu” Stadium and on the eastern side from Shahnajaf Road to La Place where a mazar or shrine exists attended by a man in traditional dress and watched by stray rickshaw men. Near the lane to Khurshid Manzil there are the remains of a pre-1857 lakhori brick wall and two anonymous graves, given a fresh coat of white paint.

Both the Boys’ and the Girls’ Colleges have kept up the tradition and responsibility of boarding pupils, while other schools have relinquished them. But there are some other, older schools which have still retained their serenity – Mount Carmel in Mahanagar, Buds and Blossoms near Qaisarbagh, and Mahila

College near the post office in busy Aminabad. The Cathedral School in Hazratganj and Springdale across the Gomti, Playway School, City Station, and Queen’s Anglo Sanskrit Inter College (1888) near Lalbagh are others.

### **Lucknow Christian Degree College**

It has been a trial-ridden road for the Lucknow Christian Degree College since the Reverend J.H. Messmore set up the School in Hussainabad in 1861 only to see his hard work destroyed in the floods of 1870. Important dates stand out: the Centennial School (1877), the Teachers Training College, and the College of Physical Education (1932). These are all a part of the Christian College near Dufferin Hospital, Golaganj, the cornerstone of which was laid on May 1, 1883. A student was charged Rs 5 per month for board and lodging.

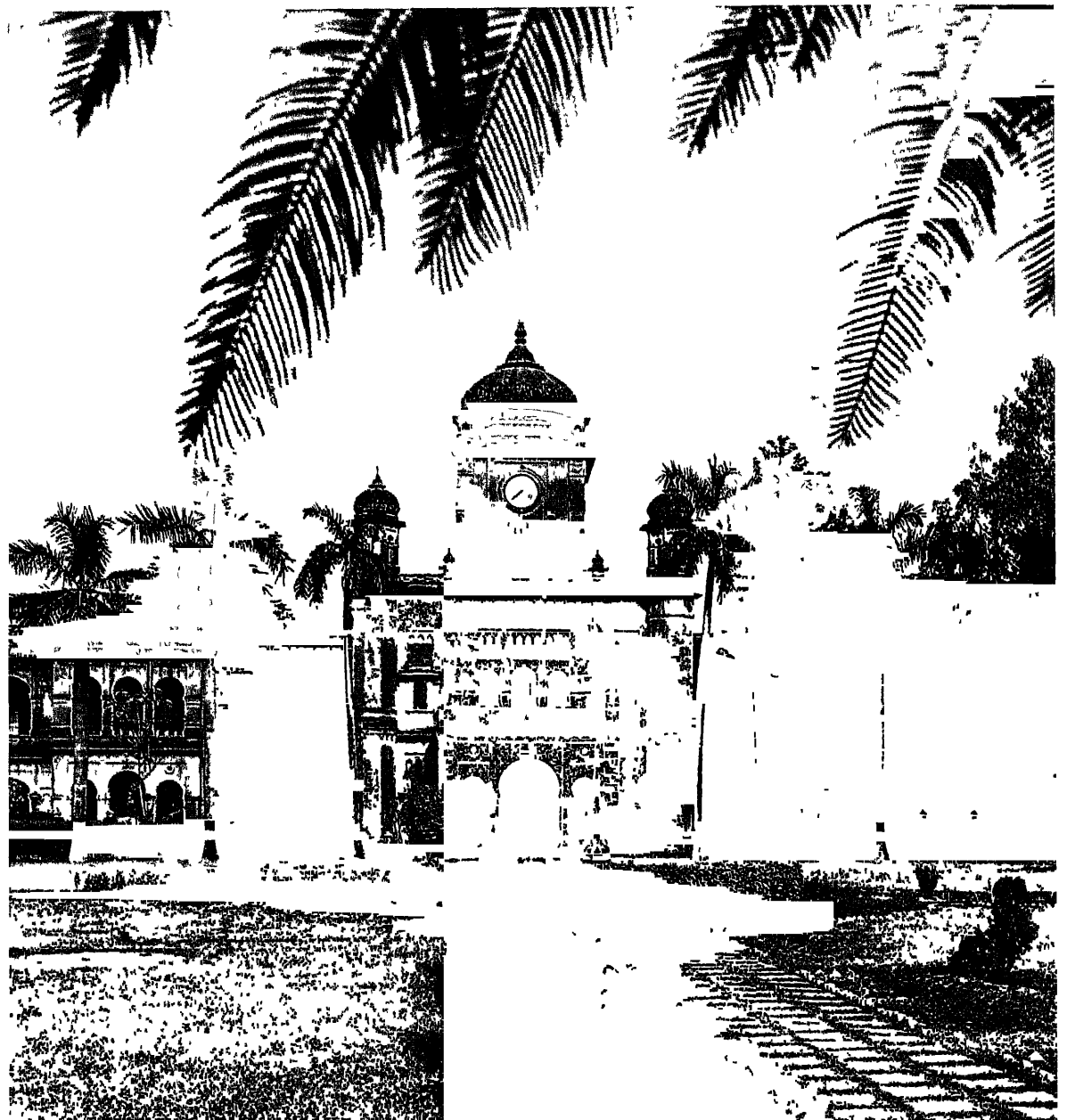
It’s the marriage of the principal’s daughter. There are the pots cooking on crackling logs of wood. The older domes are black with age. One new dome is in the shape of a Prussian helmet. There’s the Sam Fairfield Memorial Hall, July 1913. And the foundation stone of Lucknow Christian Collegiate School, by Thakoor & Sons, laid by Bishop Warne, February 16, 1912. Another marble memorial plaque, by Gurdeen & Sons, to the Reverend B.H. Badley (1849–91), founder and first principal.

The old clock in the tower shows a few minutes to 2 pm. I ask a worker about it and he says it works (figure 5). A little later it does strike the hour. I’m in a hall with an eyeview of the other side. There are fourteen large heavy wooden-framed portraits of the College’s past presidents and principals by G.W. Lawrie & Co. All except one of a man in a greatcoat, have their names engraved on small brass plates.

The Bishop Chitamber Memorial chapel, 1952, is being given the final touches (figure 6). Inside two men clean the red carpet, the pews have sprays of

5

Clock tower building,  
Lucknow Christian Degree  
College.



flowers. Above, a huge chandelier throws its yellow glow around.

The College handbook given to me by Dr A.J. Mukherjee of the Sociology Department says “use of profane languages, abuses, threats, manhandling, beating, alcoholic drinks, keeping firearms, knives and other weapons is forbidden”.

#### Lucknow University

By Government order in 1920, three colleges, Isabella Thoburn, King George’s Medical College, and Canning College, came together to form Lucknow University (figures 7–9). In the news frequently for its student unrest, the 90-acre area of the historic Badshah Bagh laid out by Nasir-ud-din Haider (1827–

37) and estates belonging to the Maharaja of Kapurthala after 1857, was in 1905 handed over to the authorities of Canning College which had been set up in 1864 in Lalbagh, but later removed to the imposing Amin-ud-daulah palace. Now the KGMC, “buildings of exquisite grace and charm built on the site of the old Macchi Bhawan Fort”, whose foundation stone “was laid by King George V as Prince of Wales on the 26th December, 1905”, has been given a new name – Chatrapati Sahuji Maharaj Medical University – and the old entrance has been done away with, a huge statue having been installed in front of the new one. The originator of the idea of a medical college in Lucknow was Raja Sir Tasadduq Rasul Khan of Jahangirabad.



There are the police tents and a patrol car. It's a quiet afternoon disturbed by speeches and shouting students. The words of the Lieutenant-Governor Sir Harcourt Butler, K.C.S.I., C.I.E., at the foundation stone-laying ceremony for the new building on March 21, 1921, echo: "cultivate discipline, true knowledge, and sanity of mind." There are two tablets I observe – one in the Chemistry Department, laid by His Excellency, Sir William Sinclair Marris, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., Governor of the United Provinces, on March 3, 1927, the other in the J.K. Institute laid post-independence by the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Govind Ballabh Pant.

An intense Professor Roop Rekha Verma, head of the Philosophy Department, former Lucknow University Vice-Chancellor, and student of the University in the 1960s, seems to have sprung from the pages of "Most unforgettable characters" in *Reader's Digest*. She tells me of the University's growth from 2,000 to over 28,000 students and the previous sense of dignity and distance between teachers and students, so unlike today. The 75 per cent attendance was not taken lightly as now, for allowing the students to appear in the examination. Most of the staff were men and there was, but for mild remarks, no teasing of the girls by the boys. The "girl from Santiniketan" used to walk from Kailash Hostel to the University Library and back alone at 8 pm, so safe was it then.

Now there are more students belonging to the economically disadvantaged sections of society. "There are no more Banerjees, Mukherjees left, with them the University lost, I've not seen it, but what's considered the glory of Awadh." Her head is bowed, absorbed in her work, as I leave the inspiring room. I go in search of a tomb near the J.K. Institute past a statue of Mahatma Gandhi in a frantic pace pose on a high pedestal. A game of cricket is on. A bust of Ram Manohar Lohia, a small bridge over a

strip of water, and the seven-foot-high church-shaped monument with a small cross on it in a small hedge enclosure, the small gate, and a cow grazing inside. There is no tablet and the lower slabs are falling apart. One of the Maharaja's elder sons lies forgotten. "He became a Christian and thereby forfeited the right both to succeed to the throne and to be gathered into his fathers when death befell him." Also buried here are Kunwar Rajender Singh, six years old, and an eighteen-month-old baby girl, Bibi Raj Kaur, both "children of Raja Sir Harnam Singh's family". About 25 metres to the left is a grave of "an unknown revolutionary of royal lineage".

The grass on the grounds is dry, but I am impressed by the iron hardness and look of the huge balustrade of the many

6  
Bishop Chitamber  
Memorial chapel at  
Lucknow Christian Degree  
College.







7  
Isabella Thoburn College.

8  
King George's Medical  
College, now Chatrapati  
Sahuji Maharaj Medical  
University.

wooden staircases of Canning College, which a student says is made of "saku" wood.

Three or four mission schools for girls in purdah did exist in Lucknow. The present-day Isabella Thoburn College girls, flocking to the gates in fashionable clothes, are unaware of the troubles faced by the American Methodist missionary in starting her one-room school of six female pupils in Aminabad on April 18, 1870, guarded by a youth with a stick. Known at first as the Lucknow Women's College, it moved from Aminabad to Inayat Bagh and then in 1871 to Lalbagh, a "superb property" of nine acres in the centre of the city. Here it shared its premises with the Lalbagh Girls' School, in "Ruby House",

owned by the treasurer of a former nawab, and purchased for Rs 14,000. "Two missionaries went to the Treasury in a buggy and returned with fourteen bags, each containing one thousand rupees, payment being made late in the evening of a Saturday, and probably every rupee was rung on steel to test its genuineness!" The school has wide red arches and a metal spiral staircase, gardens, fireplaces, and well-crafted old furniture. One of the Lalbagh girls, who tells me in English that she cannot speak English, finds one of the two marble plaques inscribed: "Lois Parker High School. This stone was laid 21 August 1909 the fifteenth anniversary of the landing of Mrs Parker in India, Gurdeen & Sons, Sculp. Lucknow." This plaque commemorates the wife of a well-known missionary, herself one of the educationalists of these early days, who set up her own school, now merged with the Lalbagh Girls' School.

There is a marble plaque in the Emma Thompson School of Lalbagh to commemorate the energetic founder, Isabella Thoburn (1841-1901), with "Isabella Thoburn College, 18th April 1870" inscribed on the small stone. The Lucknow Women's College was renamed after her when in 1923 it moved across the river Gomti, to its present site of 32 acres. "The bare field boasting but one tree...the new white building...there was an utter lack of all that had made Lalbagh a place of tradition and rich memory."

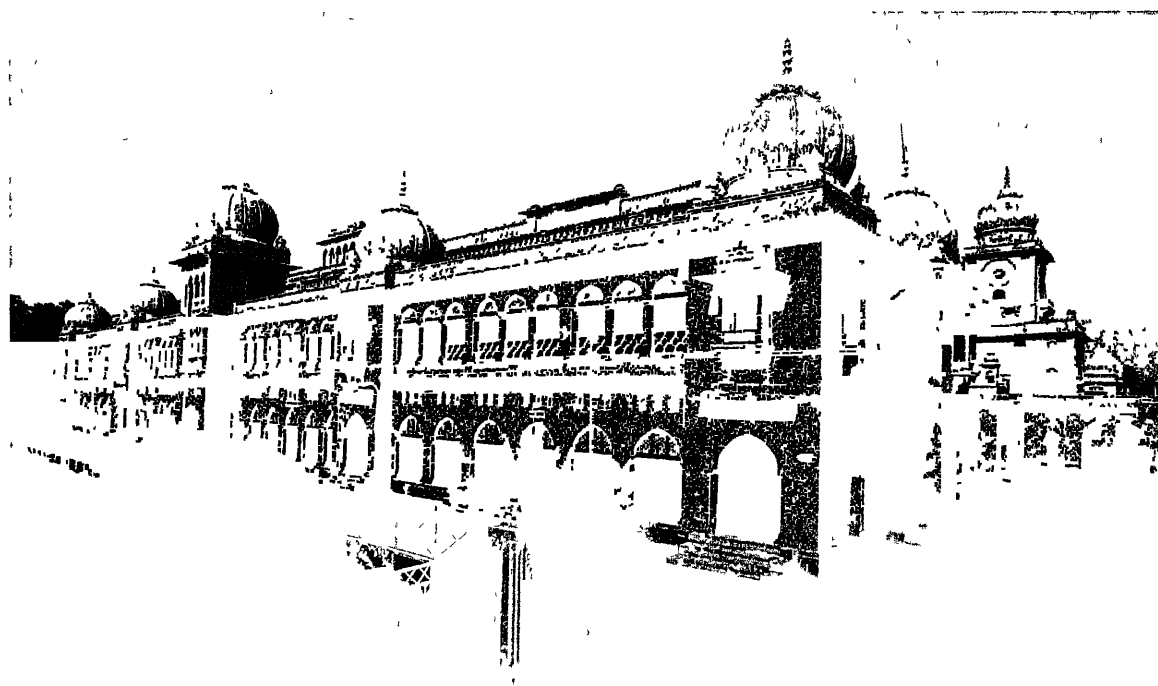
#### Still More Institutions

Near the General Post Office, with its lancet arches, pet ducks and rabbits, Christ Church College has been an early provider of co-education to higher classes of society, with a branch, Raja Maharaj School near the Epiphany Church. It started as the McConaghey Free School in 1878 where the present Grace Davis School of Lalbagh Girls' School - Emma Thompson School stands. Christ Church College is known for torchlight tattoos,

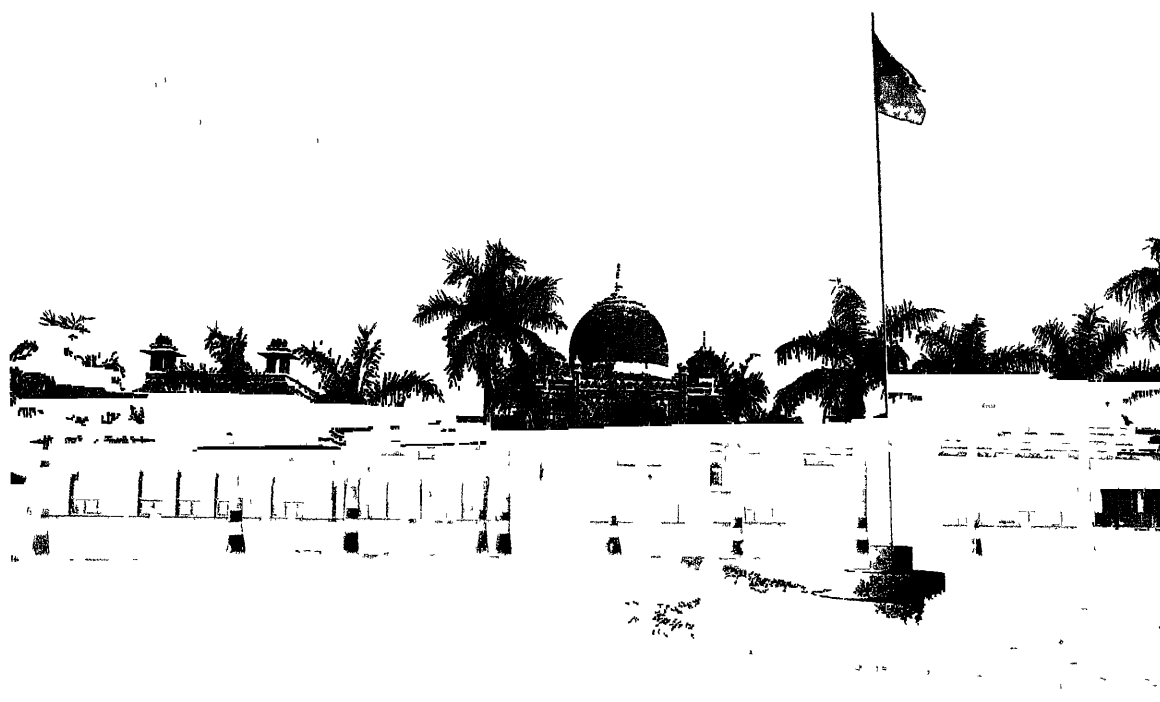


gymnastics displays with torches at night. Alongside is Christ Church with its numerous memorial tablets. There are two marble plaques in the College laid by Sir Harry Haig and Lady Haig 1938 and 1932, service conducted by the Reverend A.G. Davies-Leigh, Chaplain, and architect A.L. Mortimer, Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

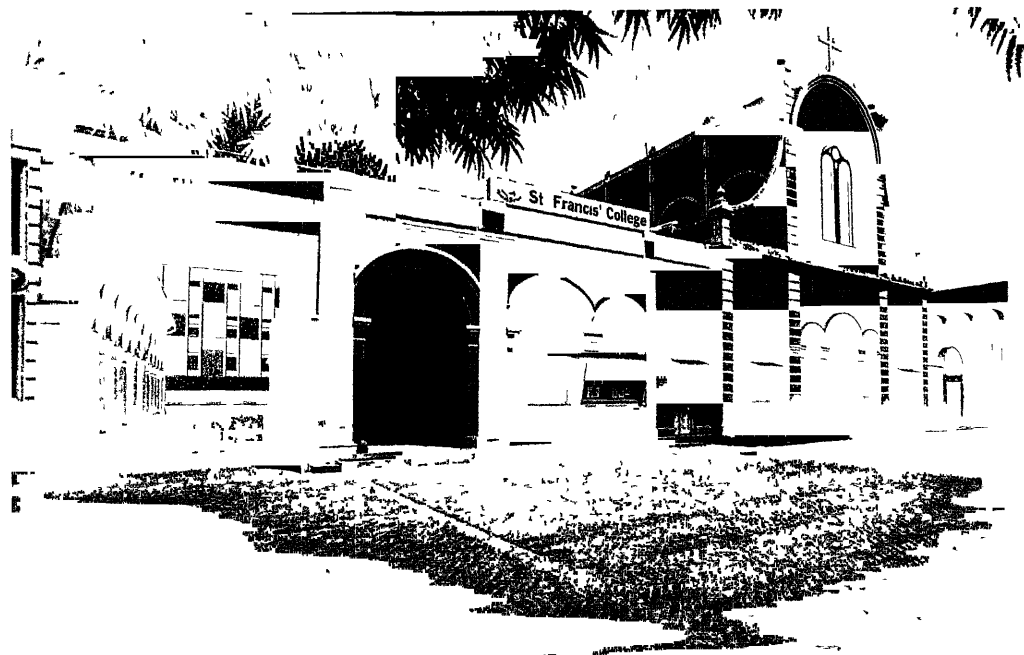
Colvin Taluqdars College on an 80-acre ground on the bank of the river Gomti, is across the road from the University (figure 10). Named after Sir Auckland Colvin, the Lieutenant-Governor, it was set up primarily for the sons of landowners (taluqdars) in 1889. The older building is redbricked with dome and newer ones similar in style to the Arts College and Bhatkhande Music



9  
Canning College.



10  
Colvin Taluqdars College



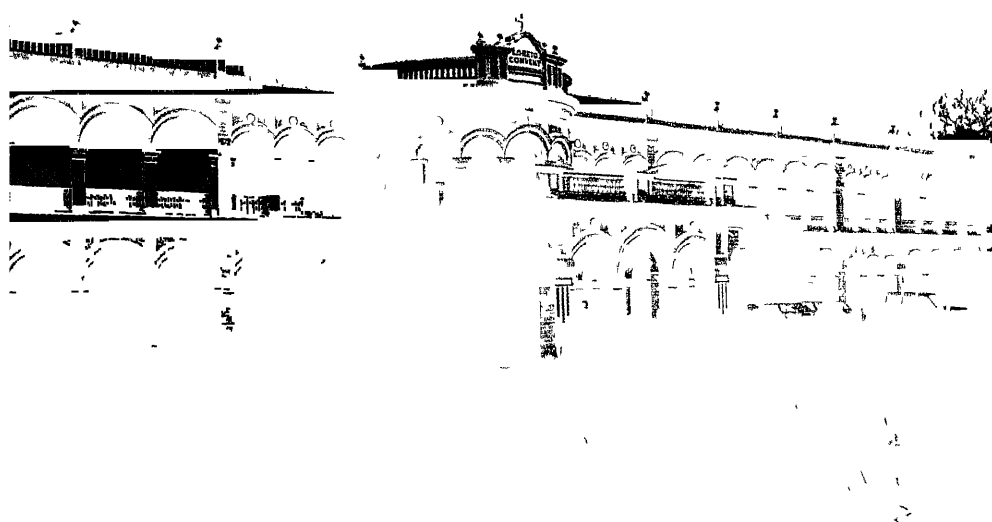
11  
St Francis' College.

Institute. The Junior School has a well laid out garden, and Ruskin Bond–Walt Disney charts.

The grit and sacrifice of the early teachers was apparent in the St Francis' School and Orphanage. On April 26, 1885, two forlorn pupils, Isaac (aged fifteen) and Charles (aged eleven), sons of a poor compositor Claudius, entered the Hazratganj bungalow of the Reverend

Father Norbert, a Catholic brother from Tossignao, in Italy. In 1918, Messrs P. Labanti & Co., an Italian firm, completed the two extreme blocks facing the front field and Shahnajaf Road. Now a college (figure 11), that “touch of humour”, the boarding has gone, so also have the teachers in the quarters, the boxing. The long chimney and weathercock, the tin sheets connecting the school with the workshops to its left, have disappeared. No more jackals howling. Is the large lime tree at the back still there? Across the wall, it had been a source of contention since the 1920s. At St Francis' too films were shown, but in the day within the closed doors of the gymnasium, reels mixed up, from large projectors now seen only in museums. They lacked the enchantment of the La Martiniere film shows.

Memories remain of outstanding teachers – Reverend Father Celestine O.F. Cap. (1910–41), Reverend Father Romano known as “Prince Charming”, who conducted the Latin service in the school chapel, Reverend Brother Salvator the disciplinarian, his many canes, his guns, his dogs, his love for walking endlessly down the corridors (he was extremely



12  
Loreto Convent.



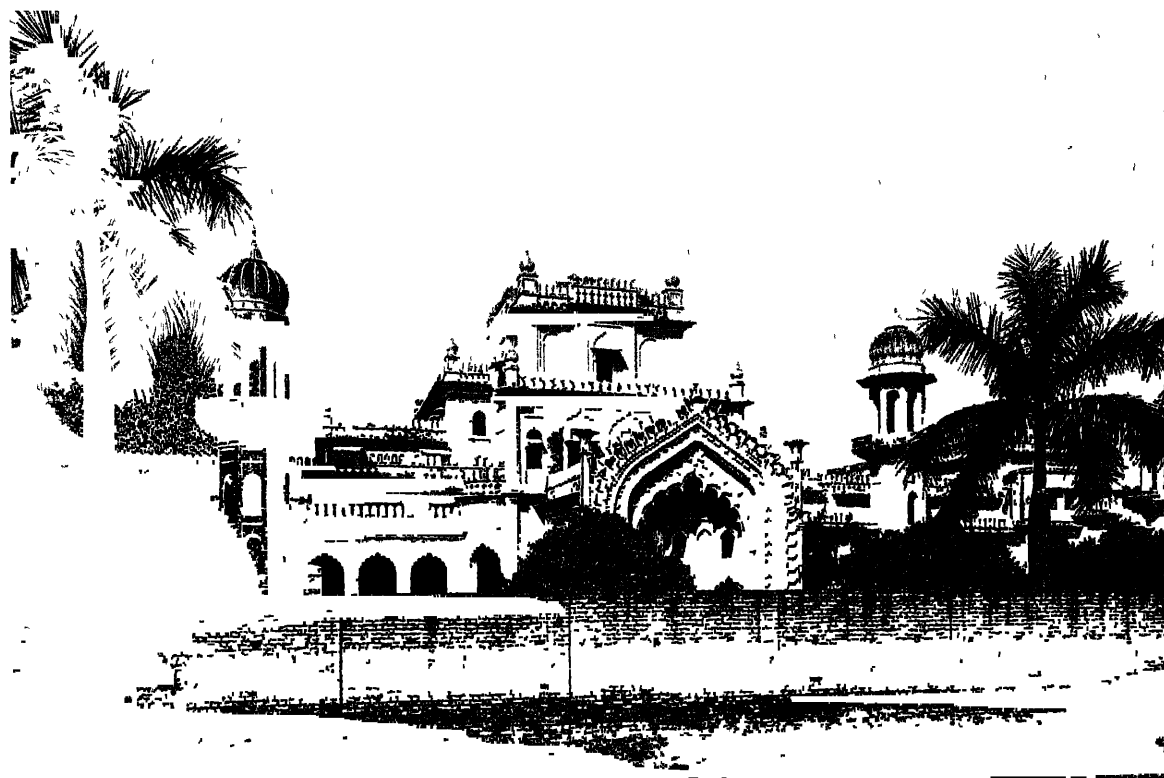
kind towards me), P.P. Misra, “the grand old man of St Francis”, with “stand up if you’re sure”, setting his tie and pulling up his trousers, the few white hairs on his head swaying like strands of cotton as he asked the date of the first battle of Panipat. Basil Joseph, headmaster, a Malacca-cane in school, a smile after. Under Joe Parker, former M.E.G. Coach and P.T. Instructor, SFS became a shining example of sportsmanship achieving grand heights from boxing to hockey. Joe Rodrigues “the golden glover” student-teacher-friend, and Osama Talha who became a reporter, “eager to expose underworld rackets”. All have now passed into history.

When the Loreto Convent (figure 12) set up by Mother Joseph Hogan opened in Lucknow on Mall Road (now Mahatma Gandhi Road) on November 4, 1872, “the memories of the mutiny were vivid, and the nuns were asked to think of their security first”. Thirty-one years earlier, in Calcutta, Loreto had “opened its doors to the first 60 pupils”. In January 1873 Lucknow’s Loreto “welcomed the first boarder there”. In 1904, its sister school St Agnes’ Loreto Convent Day School was opened for day

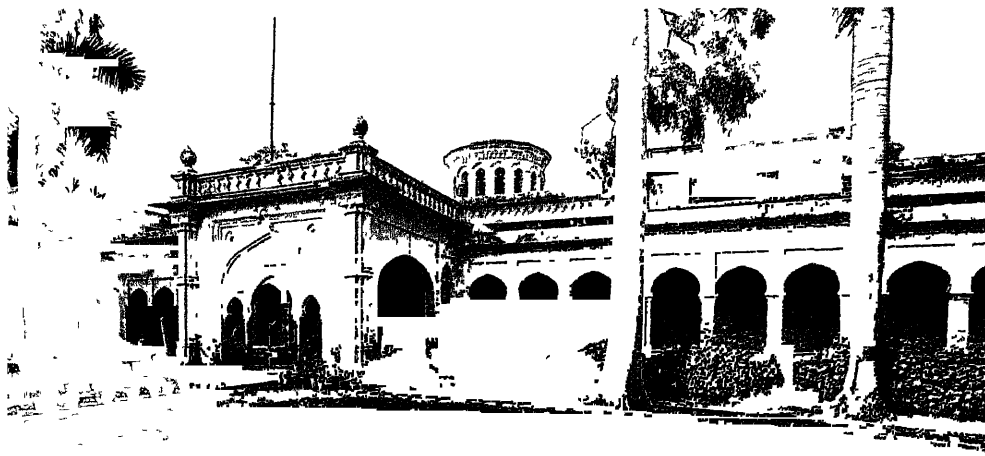
scholars. (Rai Bahadur G.N. Chakrawarty, Vice Chancellor, University of Lucknow, writes in *Indian Science Congress Handbook* that St Agnes was founded in 1887.) Old students recall this school on Station Road as being a swampy place, which may be why it has so many trees. Three Muslim graves, one with its lakhori bricks showing, and part of a lakhori wall are traces of the site’s history.

All three schools, Loreto, St Agnes’, and St Francis’, have a similar frontage and as in the Awadh Degree College near Loreto, there is much space and “no dingy corridors”, with ample good old furniture. Both St Agnes’ and Loreto run schools for those unable to afford entry to their rich portals; paradoxically admission to these schools is much sought-after, especially by the state’s elite.

In the past, a part of the tradition kept alive by enthusiastic students, La Martiniere boys and girls were supposed to marry one another, while those of St Francis’ and Loreto would do the same. A grandmother’s story – a real one – of the 1880s–90s – had the Martiniere boy doing the Sir Walter Raleigh act, picking



13  
Darul-ul-oom Nadwat-ul-Ulema, a Muslim college on the banks of the river. Note the “nawabi” arch on the late 19th-century building.



**14 a,b**  
Government School of Arts  
and Crafts.

up a Martiniere girl who was stranded on one of the flooded bridges near Old Lucknow – watched by open-mouthed St Francis’ boys.

A number of madrassas and Muslim colleges, reflecting the Muslim faith and love of learning, include the Shia College, the Farangi Mahal Seminary, and the Darul-ul-oom Nadwat-ul-Ulema founded by Maulana Shibli Naumani of Aligarh Muslim University in 1898 here on the river bank (figure 13), with over 4,000 students, and with an education in theological Arabic literature. Bearded

students in the traditional cap and kurta-pajama are seen all along the way in twos and threes, walking briskly. This great centre of education and culture is spick and span with green lawns and growing trees. It’s a quarter past five in the evening, the muezzin’s call echoes as the students and teachers hurry to the beautiful tall, wide mosque. Pages of history seem to unfold as women in burqas walk along, and rickshaws drive up the pathway.

The arts are catered for by the Government School of Arts and Crafts set up in 1911, under Nathaniel Heard, “to preserve and boost Indian crafts thought to be in danger of extinction”. Along the river Gomti before the University, down an incline and along the winding road below, a twenty-minute walk brings one to the College (figure 14). Here H. Roy Chowdhary, the sculptor, worked with Asit Kumar Haldar, B. Sen, and L.M. Sen. Roy Chowdhary’s pair of marble statues of King George V can be seen in the Lucknow Zoo (museum section), and of Mahatma Gandhi and other Indian leaders in Lucknow’s offices and parks. The School also had a section for silver and gold smithing. What caught my eye was an object turned towards the sky, a student told me had been made out of a cycle. And a 3-metre-wide 2-metre-high cupboard with a glass front.

The Bhatkhande Music Institute in Qaisarbagh (figure 15) came into being as the Marris Music College in 1926 and was renamed after Pandit V.N. Bhatkhande (1860–1936) the “law-giver of modern Hindustani music”. Dr Poornima Pandey, former Lalbagh Girls’ School and Isabella Thoburn College student is in the Director’s chair. Watched by a large painting of the musician who brought together “the disintegrated limbs of our music”, she tells me, “Even boys who misbehave in the University, when they come here they touch the guru’s feet, touch the steps, and have a spiritual relationship.”





But as Dr Pandey and two teacher-examiners told me, the standard of the college has fallen. "They prefer after the third year to go for filmi shows." The teacher settling his turban says "You know, the craze is just to get the certificate...social conditions... marriage...."

Amidst the laughter of a score of boys and girls, a girl looks crestfallen as her fingers fail to pluck the sitar's string to the beat of a tabla. In another room a tabla player is unable to play in tune with the sarangi, nor can he answer the examiner orally. The sarangi, the oldest Indian instrument, short and broad, is explained to me; also the importance of the tabla's black patch.

The universal timelessness of music is not lost as two men, heads raised, holding each other, wearing sunglasses, sticks in hand, move past us in the corridor. It is dark outside, as my shoes go down the steps. Girls passing me bend to touch the steps, and draw up their hands to their foreheads in reverence to this place of learning.

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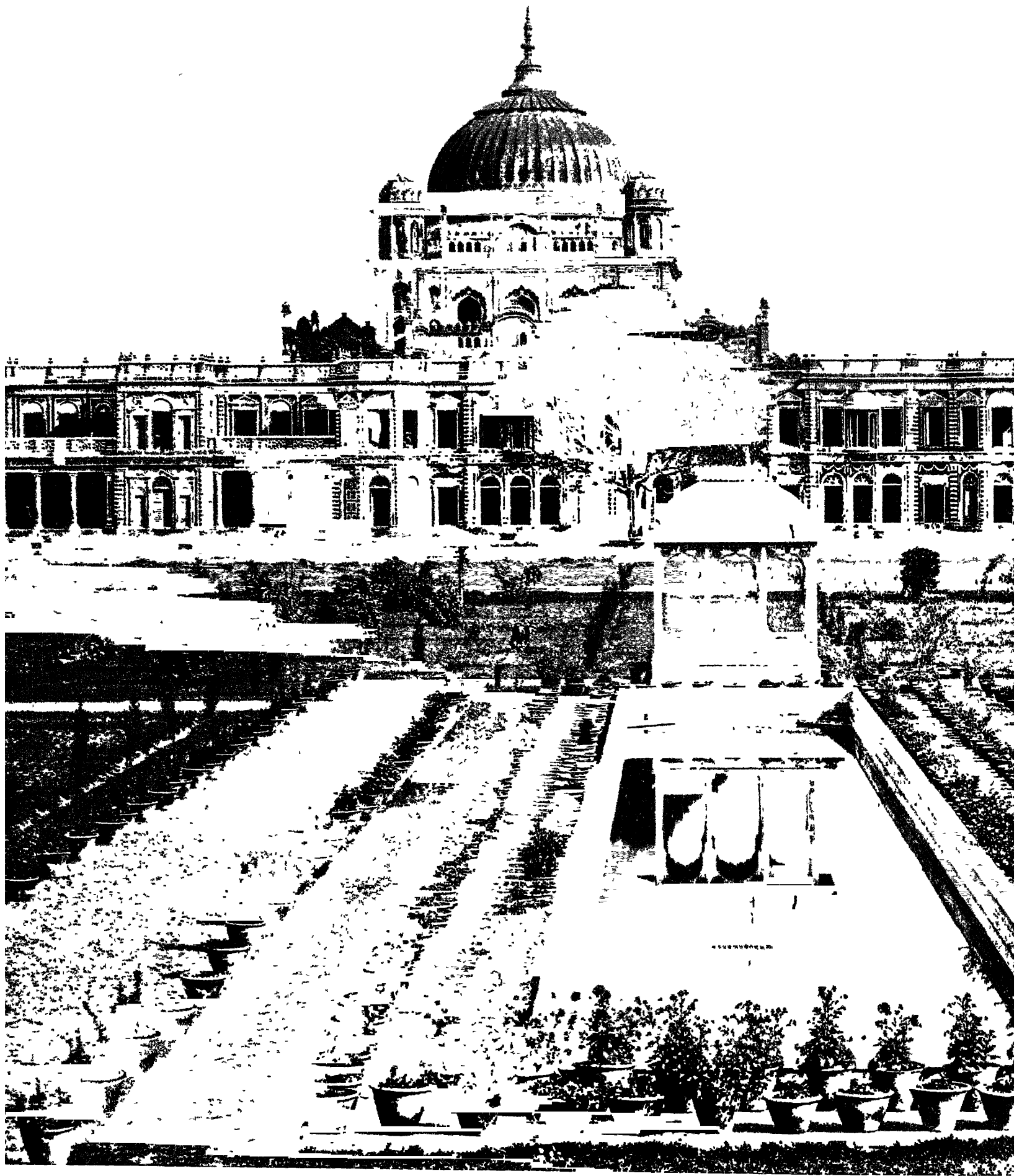
*The Pioneer*, Lucknow.

*The Statesman*, Delhi, Calcutta.

15

Bhatkhande Music Institute.





# Building on Past Traditions: The Victorian, Edwardian, and Modernist Architecture of Lucknow

*Christopher W. London*

Lucknow is a city blessed with a rich and deeply fascinating architectural past. Both scholars of India and the casual visitor to the city, interested in history, usually become familiar with the well-known monuments of the nawabs. These buildings, well-photographed in the 19th century, remain at the heart of the city's historic central precinct today. Indeed, some of the most dramatic photographs of 19th-century India captured in their backdrop settings the nawabs' palaces and court buildings, embroiled in the events associated with the upheaval of 1857. The scale and overt opulence of these court structures, coupled with their European look, probably made the events captured in their foreground, or among their ruins, seem yet more ghastly and unimaginable to the Western public of the time, a point most likely not lost upon the photographers of the day (figure 2).

The principal and most noteworthy features of these monuments are their innovative approaches to style. Some of the innovations that arose, relate in part to the use and development of the imambara as a building type. Yet, for other works, their novelty relates more particularly to the abiding interest in European architecture, which infatuated the court. Some published reflections on these buildings have perceived them to be architecturally decadent manifestations of a dissolute court (figure 1).

"In the place of mosques, wells, forts, or bridges, palace after palace sprang up in succession, each more ungraceful and extravagant than the last. At the same time European influence began to make itself felt in the architecture, which grew gradually more and more debased from reign to reign. Awkward imitations of Corinthian columns supported Musalman domes, while false Venetian blinds and stucco marble replaced the solid brickwork of the earlier period. Palaces were erected for the kings, for their wives, and for their concubines, and hardly less palatial buildings to house royal menageries. Saadat Ali Khan set the fashion by erecting the [Chattar Manzil around the] Farhat Bakhsh or 'giver of delight', the chief royal residence till the last king, Wajid Ali Shah, built the Kaisar Bagh."<sup>1</sup>

**1**  
Tombs of Nawab Saadat Ali  
Khan and his wife  
Khurshid Zadi, about 1870,  
by John Edward Saché.  
OIOC Photo 2/3(140).

2

Sikanderbagh interior courtyard, March/April 1858, by Felice Beato. This photograph was staged for the public, to increase the sensational aspect of the image OIOC Photo 27(2).



Characterizations of this type may relate to the revulsion felt by Western writers of the 19th and early 20th century to the historic role Lucknow played in the "Mutiny", mistakenly looking for evidence of a moral decline in the unrelated physical appearance of these buildings. However, such perceptions miss the point of this architecture, and discourage others today from engaging with the fascinating forms that emerged from this vibrant interaction of two dynamic cultures. That such pointed criticism of the buildings persists to the present, relates more to the reliance of current critics upon historic sources, than to the inherent lack of merit or formal sophistication displayed by the buildings themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Rather, the nawabs' preferences in design clearly reveal only their keen appreciation for European styling in the construction and planning of the court's buildings. When thoroughly pursued this aristocratic design impulse results in a

particular work like the Dilkusha, a carefully modelled and adapted structure based quite directly upon a specific British building (figure 3).<sup>3</sup> Others have an "exhibition building" feel to them, temporary, festive, and perhaps a bit outlandish in styling (figure 4).

Some "outside" non-Indian influences in evidence at Lucknow are attributed to the Europeans who settled at the court prior to the events of 1857. These Europeans came in search of either military employment or commercial opportunity, as clearly described in Rosie Llewellyn-Jones' studies of the city.<sup>4</sup> However, because the nawabi buildings are so central to our idea of what Lucknow is, this article will examine later and less familiar buildings at Lucknow, hoping thereby to add these works to the pantheon of "common knowledge" associated with the city. These works continue the already well-established historic tradition of outsiders and outside influences, call it a

"European taste", contributing to the architectural appearance of Lucknow. However, in many cases the buildings built after the nawabs' hegemony have a civic purpose, and they were developed by the British principally to serve either their own cultural needs, or to improve living standards and services in the city. Prior to this era, it was Indians themselves who made most of the designs and constructed the majority of buildings in the city, despite the common assertion that Europeans built these other works.

### The Victorian Era

The Victorian architecture of Lucknow, post 1857, consists of only a few buildings of interest. Contrary to the assertions of some who feel the British substantially rebuilt Lucknow imposing their architectural styles on the city, there is a relative paucity of large projects.

Christ Church, erected within the Civil Lines in 1860, at the junction of the former Park and Abbot Roads (now Mahatma Gandhi Marg and Hazratganj), is the first of such works (figure 5). Designed by Lt. Swetenham R.E. it was to initially serve the Protestant community as a memorial to the "Mutiny" dead. Consecrated by Bishop Cotton on November 26, 1860, "It contains a large number of mural tablets to the memory of officers who fell during the Mutiny of 1857. The stone pulpit is a memorial to Captain Nicol Hardy who died in battle near the spot on which it stands, on 17th November 1857."<sup>5</sup> General Hutchinson designed memorial tablets for the interior to honour the officers Sir James Outram and Sir Henry Lawrence, and the reredos is a memorial to Col. Bruce, Inspector General of the Oudh police. Built in the English

3

Dilkusha, about 1858, unknown photographer. The design is based upon Seaton Delaval Hall, Northumberland, by the architect Sir John Vanbrugh of 1718-28. OIOC Photo 25(34).



4

Mermaid Gate,  
Qaisarbagh, 1864–65, by  
Samuel Bourne. Note the  
festive, “exhibition-  
building” quality of the  
gateway enfilade.  
OIOC Photo.

decorated neo-Gothic style, described as the “modern style of architecture”, the brick and stucco finished church boasted a substantial bell-tower, double height interior proportions, and attenuated pinnacles at its roofline. Originally there do not seem to have been sufficient funds for a clock in its belfry tower, though the circular insets were provided, and there was a limited quantity of stained glass employed. The church was enlarged and improved in 1904 and then again in 1916, the latter at a cost of Rs 27,000. The whole has a compact plan with several entrances, its window openings seem quite small relative to the amount of walls, and the use of buttresses on the external walls at corner junctions comprise the majority of its decorative vocabulary. Today, the interior has elegant stained-glass panels behind the altar and down the nave.

A more modest construction of the same date is the Cantonment Church also of 1860 (figure 6). Designed by Major Crommelin R.E., it was consecrated in

November 1860 as well. This was a very plain single-storey church in the neo-Gothic style. It employed long lancet windows, corner buttresses, and drip-course detailing for ornamentation on its brick and stucco frame.

St Joseph’s Church at Hazratganj (figure 7), where the Cathedral now stands, was sited opposite the former offices of the Oudh & Rohilkund Railway Co. The original structure also dated from the 1860s, and when opened it served as the first Roman Catholic church of the Civil Lines. Here a double-height brick and stucco church was built on a cross-shaped floor plan. More modest than the Protestant church, it had no bell tower, only one main entrance with a porte-cochère and less surface decoration to its exterior. However, there were large lancet windows used throughout the ground floor and circular windows employed throughout the upper section of the church, yielding a considerably brighter interior. Noticeable external buttressing, employed for decoration, was also a feature of this



church, and here it was used more prominently than at Christ Church.

The boldest of the architectural improvements to Lucknow in the Victorian era must be the Hussainabad Clock Tower of 1881 (figure 8). Built on the site of one of two Gend Khanas (racquet courts), the tower is over 67 metres high and 6 metres square. It was built at a cost of Rs 1,17,000, the money coming from an endowment of Rs 36 lakhs bequeathed by Muhammad Ali Shah, the eighth Nawab of Oudh. Built as a decorative feature in a pleasure garden, it is the first of the “architect designed” structures to be put up in the era. By this I mean not erected by a Royal Engineer, but rather by an articulated and fully trained architect who came out to India to work specifically in this professional field. The site is now known as the Clock Tower Gardens and it fronts the Hussainabad Tank.

Designed by Richard Roskell Bayne FRIBA in a transitional Victorian neo-Gothic style, the tall slender building rises from a battered base.<sup>6</sup> The tower employs machicolated brickwork beneath its capping element, and it has a profile capped by four-domed, corner finial, onion domes, on two levels, surmounted



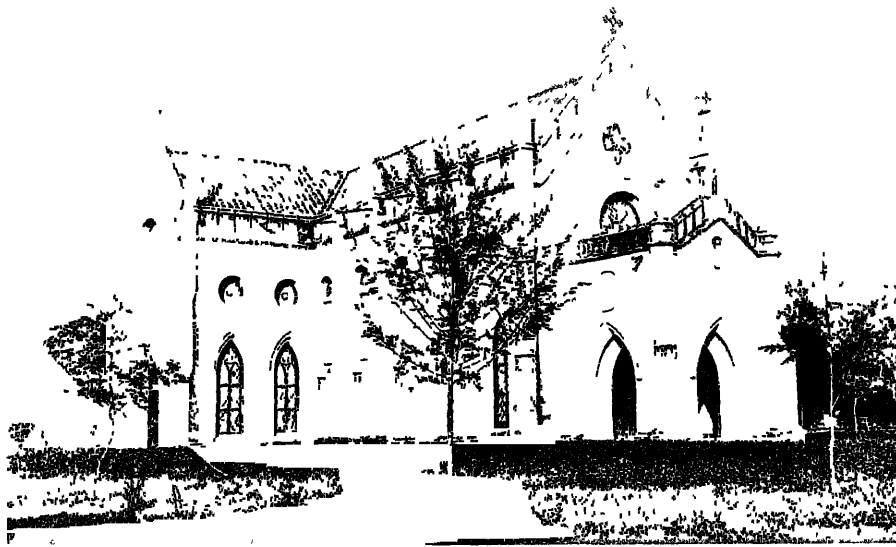
5  
Christ Church, 1874, by  
Daroga Abbas Ali, plate 11  
in *The Lucknow Album*. OIOC  
Photo 988(11)

by a larger uppermost central dome which has a weather-vane crown. The Clock Tower was constructed of finely finished brick and seems to draw design inspiration from Hispano-Moresque sources. In the lower portion of the tower, there are four large balconies, entered through horseshoe shaped arched doorways and supported on oversize brackets. Then there is a plain walled



6  
Cantonment Church,  
about 1861, by Ahmed Ali  
Khan (Chota Miyan).  
Designed by Major  
Crommelin, Royal  
Engineers, consecrated  
November 1860. OIOC  
Photo 147/1(38).





7  
St Joseph's Church, 1874,  
by Daroga Abbas Ali, plate  
10 in *The Lucknow Album*.  
OIOC 988(10).

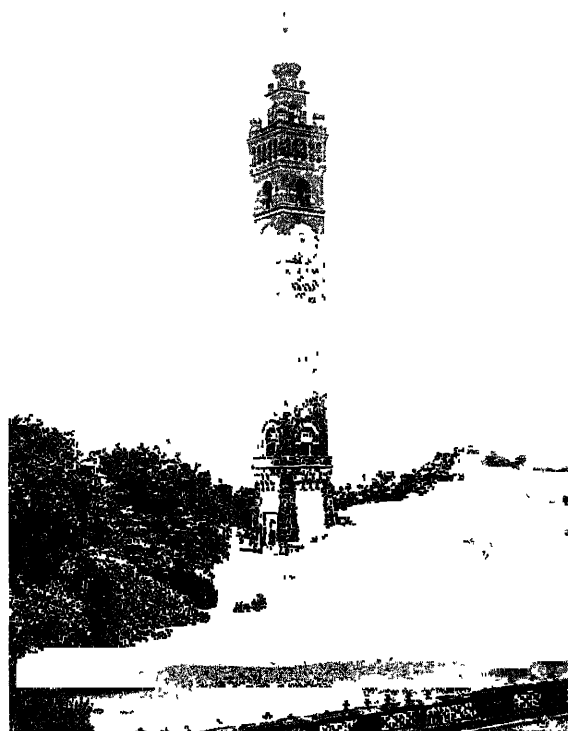
central section. Above this Bayne has applied diapered and butt end brick offsets, and light coloured stone banding at six points, to help provide scale in the structure.

J.W. Benson of Ludgate Hill, London, manufactured the clock. It is the largest clock-face in India, nearly 4 metres in diameter, and originally it had a chime of five bells, to announce the quarter hours indicated on the dial. The machicolations above the clock-face allow the sound to resonate and carry much farther afield. The clock-face was also unusual for another innovation of

its era. It was designed with a multi-foil translucent glass dial, illuminated at night through the use of gas jets set within the clock tower. The gas jets backlit the black enamelled digits on the face, enabling the clock to be read at night, a novelty for India at the time.

Bayne was a pupil of Sir William Emerson PRIBA (President of RIBA, 1893–1924), one of India's foremost architects, now famous for his last work, the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta, analysed and described in an earlier Marg book.<sup>7</sup> Bayne worked as Emerson's assistant in the construction of the Thornhill-Mayne Memorial, the Mayo Hall, and probably also All Saints' Cathedral at Allahabad, during the 1870s.<sup>8</sup> These buildings are exceptional constructions and each reveals some of the most inventive Victorian era architectural detailing to be found in India. So, Bayne had excellent exposure to both the ingenious designs of Emerson and his meticulous working methods. The results are amply demonstrated by the careful massing and fine detailing exhibited in the Clock Tower's final form, drawn it would seem, from Seville Cathedral's Giralda tower, itself the original minaret of the great mosque that stood there. The fusion of late medieval Spanish architecture with Bayne's Victorian architectural predilections produced a most successful design here. Thus, the building visibly demonstrates how the detailed – almost archaeologic – study and publication of earlier European architectural styles and buildings by Victorian architects could, in the hands of a sympathetic colleague, offer such interesting design solutions. Such work also dovetails well with the nawabi design tradition referenced in the Dilkusha project, above. Ultimately Bayne's commission leads to the next significant era in the architectural development of Lucknow, the Edwardian one.

8  
Hussainabad Clock Tower,  
about 1923, unknown  
photographer At the time  
of construction (1881) it  
had the largest clock-face  
in India, designed with a  
translucent glass dial,  
which when illuminated  
from within the tower,  
enabled the clock to be  
read at night. OIOC 10/  
8(8).



### The Edwardian Era – Ecclesiastical Buildings

The Edwardian era witnessed the construction of some of the finest British public buildings in the city. During this period the number of projects rose substantially and several architects of distinction were working in Lucknow.

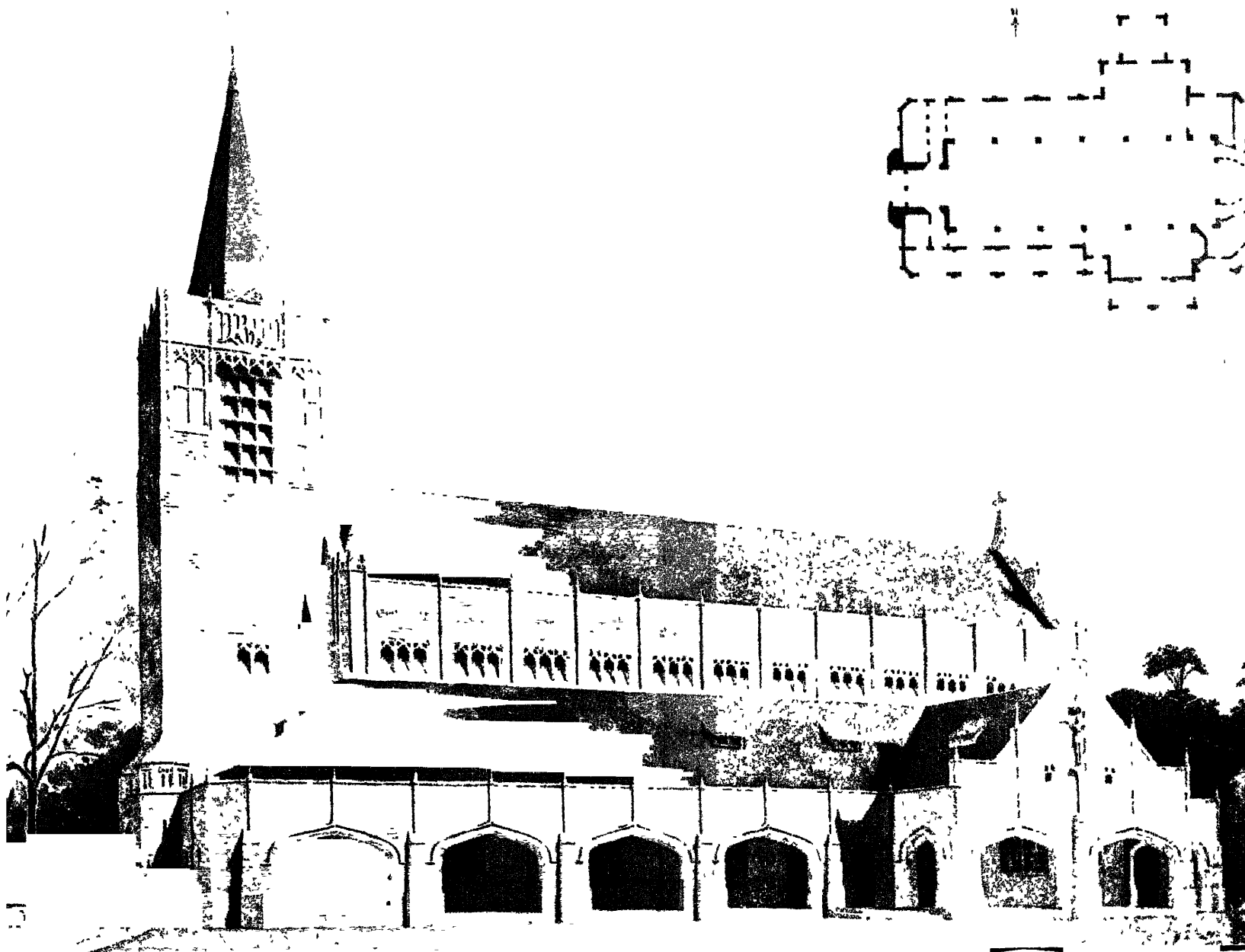
An early project of this era is St Mungo's Church of Scotland, consecrated in 1909.<sup>9</sup> No architect is given for the project, but I believe it to be the first of a series of works undertaken by James Ransome (1865–1944), the Consulting Architect to the Government of India, and his office. The office of "Consulting Architect" was a further extension of the skills already provided by the individual British architect in India. This new institution, founded in 1902, brought to bear on each project the latest skills available in Britain to the architectural

field in India. Young architects were recruited for this job through examination and interview, and they formed an office, from which individual architects travelled to various cities, carrying with them the collective skills of a fairly large-sized firm to individual projects. In Lucknow the two principal contributors were James Ransome and Frank Lishman (1869–1938).<sup>10</sup>

Ransome's successor, John Begg, and his team, then collaborated to produce the designs for another church, the Dalhousie Church, of 1909. The construction of this building took place during 1913–14. The head of the team on site was Lishman, now styled "architect to the United Provinces", as the state was then called. Designs for the Dalhousie Church, also referred to as the Lucknow Church in the literature, were published in the *Annual Report on Architectural Work in India for the year 1912–13*

9

Design of 1908 for All Saints' (New Garrison)/ Anglican Church 1911–13. Ransome's designs were carried out by J. Begg and F. Lishman. The striking composition has elements cribbed from Magdalene College, Oxford, mixed with the architect G F Bodley's designs OIOC W 2967, plate No. XXVII.



Ransome also designed All Saints' (New Garrison)/Anglican Church (figure 9). His design work for the church must date from 1908, after which time he left India for Britain. The construction dates from 1911–13, and it was carried out under the supervision of Begg by Lishman. The building cost Rs 91,000 to build and it is a striking composition. It has elements cribbed from Magdalene College, Oxford and “an old issue of one of the building journals” according to Ransome’s accounts.<sup>11</sup> The drawing for the church showed a simply rendered “modern” treatment for the exterior of the church, reminiscent of G.F. Bodley. The ground floor was fully arcaded, the spire was inset in the roof of the bell tower, and it was placed over the entrance porch of the building in a tight compact floor plan.

As built by Ransome’s successors some simplification of the details was made. The arcade was dispensed with, the tower’s height was shortened, the side walling was made less costly, and the side entrances were condensed to one bay. However, the overall treatment is still quite striking and novel for India, and the work set new patterns in design when compared to Christ Church of the 1870s, for instance.

Lishman went on to design the St Peter’s Railway Church, at Charbagh and Alambagh colonies, whose preliminary design was published in the *Annual Report on Architectural Work in India for the year 1912–13*. The Bishop of Lucknow laid the foundation stone for the Railway Church and construction commenced in December 1914. Its dedication was held on October 8, 1915. The brick building varies its northeast and southwest exposures to protect the south side with a full arcade on the ground floor, whereas its northwestern aspect pushes the side chapel out two floors in height. The east wall has deep overhanging eaves, simple sleek buttress forms, and tall thin lancet windows, which allow light to penetrate

the nave of the church during morning services. Collectively, these plain finishes contribute to the handsome styling of the church.

#### **The Edwardian Era – Public Buildings**

One of the first public buildings constructed by the British at Lucknow in the 20th century was the Judicial Commissioners & Small Causes Court. Its foundation stone was laid on March 31, 1900. Designed by a Mr Wood, it employed a Muslim style, with chhajas (eaves) and lime-plastered walls where “the ornate has been sacrificed to the convenient and the economical”.<sup>12</sup> The building has a central office block with two wings, and is located on the left side of Neill Road running from the Telegraph Office to the Residency, and adjacent to the District Court.

Then, on December 26, 1905, the Prince of Wales laid the foundation stone for what became a large campus of architecturally related buildings, the King George’s Medical College & Hospital (figure 10). The hospital was built upon the old site of the Macchi Bhawan fort and palace, a site purchased by Sir Henry Lawrence for Rs 50,000 in 1857. Part of the site was demolished for strategic and military reasons. The reigning Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, opened the hospital section and with it a new bridge over the river Gomti, on January 10, 1914, bestowing his own name on the bridge at the same time. The college was opened two years earlier, on January 25, 1912. Subsequently, Lucknow University has combined the Medical College (1910–12) and Hospital (1905–14) with Canning College (1909–11) and the Isabella Thoburn College for Women (1923) to create one institution. Though Thoburn College is in the classical style, the other sections of the university were all designed by Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob (1841–1917) in “a far more successful commingling of European and native architectural styles than the grander





palaces of the kings of Oudh.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Swinton Jacob was one of Britain’s foremost practitioners of the Indo-Saracenic style, and his work in Lucknow is consistent with his well-deserved reputation. The Medical College Hospital, the Ladies Student Hostel (1912–14), and Canning College all incorporate domes, large pointed arch doorways, chhatris (cupolas) at their rooflines, and chhajas to break the sun as part of their architectural vocabulary. The hospital, a brick building faced with plaster, employed two full storey height wings for the accommodation of patients. Its roofline employed octagonal and four-sided corner chhajas over all the windows and “nawabi” style crenellated balcony details. The building’s central block rises to four storeys, and the whole structure stands on a noticeable decorated plinth.

In sum, the Hospital complex forms a very decorative feature on the skyline of Lucknow. Its site atop a hill, which slopes down to the Gomti, gives it both a commanding presence and takes advantage of the breezes and open air of the riverfront

site. Though some critics disliked the style of the buildings at the time of their opening, the complex does relate well to the architecture of Lucknow and Jacob’s siting does show his architectural designs off to their best effect.

Across the river from the rest of the campus, on land handed over to the institution in 1905 at Badshah Bagh, near the historic site of the iron bridge, Canning College was located on a former 90-acre estate of the nawabs. Sir John Hewett, the serving Lieutenant-Governor laid the foundation stone for the college on March 31, 1909, and he opened the building on February 17, 1911. Although the buildings are located across the river and physically separated from the rest of the campus, they still adhere stylistically to the architectural whole that was Swinton Jacob’s contribution and vision.

Swinton Jacob also designed Lucknow’s Victoria Memorial (1904–08), the Charbagh Railway Station (1914), the brick and stucco finished Arabic School (1910–11) – now called the Darul-ul-oom Nadwat-ul-Ulema at Tagore Marg on the

10  
King George’s Medical  
College & Hospital,  
constructed 1905–14.  
S.S. Jacob’s designs  
incorporated a roofline  
employing chhatris,  
chhajas, nawabi style  
windows and crenellated  
balcony details on a  
decorated plinth. OIOC  
Photo 66/2 (109).

north bank of the Gomti, and the Amir-ud-daula Public Library (1921) at Qaisarbagh<sup>14</sup> in the Indo-Saracenic style.

Now that the Indo-Saracenic style has been considered, the “Edwardian Baroque” civic buildings of Lucknow must be examined. These include the Council Hall/Council Chambers Buildings (1928) of Lucknow, designed by Henry Vaughan Lanchester FRIBA (1863–1953) and Thomas Arthur Lodge Jnr. FRIBA (1888/89–1967).<sup>15</sup> The Chambers was built of carved grey chunar sandstone blocks and consisted of a domed building with great circular wings and a porte-cochère, in which the baroque decorative motifs he and Edwin Alfred Rickards (1872–1920) had used in their public buildings in Britain gave place to an interesting attempt to wed the East to the West by adding to a generally classical scheme a considerable amount of Hindu detail.

Lanchester and Lodge followed this work with their designs for the brick Post and Telegraph Offices (1931–32) at Hazratganj. The Offices replaced facilities located at the Begum Kothi, on the left side of Hazratganj, and they are capped by a lofty clock tower. The building is an exciting example of urbanism, representing as it does a fusion of Art Deco, Hindu, and Beaux-Arts styles, and it adds another bold tower to the relatively flat skyline of Lucknow. The creation of this towered building in a garden setting relates well to another fundamental interest of Lanchester, town planning, an area he both lectured and published upon throughout his career.

#### **Walter Burley Griffin – Remarkable Modernism**

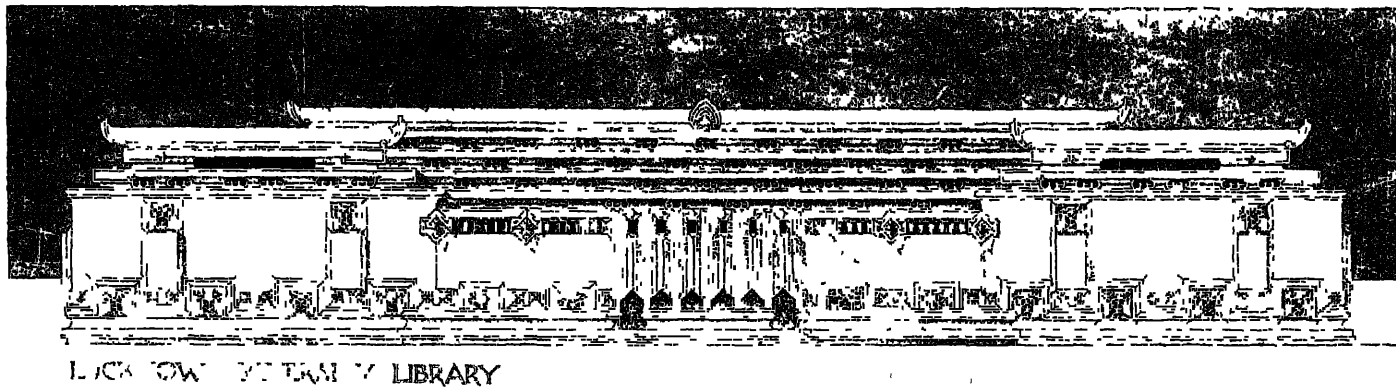
With the appearance of Walter Burley Griffin (1876–1937) in Lucknow, in November 1935, the last highly distinguished architectural work by a Westerner came to be built in the city prior to Indian Independence. Griffin trained with Frank Lloyd Wright, and he

was a keen admirer of Louis Sullivan’s work, the two most famous and distinguished “Chicago School” architects.<sup>16</sup> Griffin worked closely with his wife Marion Mahony Griffin, and these two brought their brilliant vision of “modern” architecture to India together.<sup>17</sup> Griffin was clearly captivated by Lucknow for he perceived in the Saracenic architecture around him the stimulus of “Moorish” prototypes that served to inspire Sullivan. He stated in reference to Indian architecture in general and his reaction to New Delhi in particular: “the pre-European capitals, the ruins of which extend continuously for some thirteen miles in each direction, must have been even more magnificent and certainly more imaginative and romantic; and the more ancient they are, the more architecturally satisfying”.... He was even more pleased with Lucknow.<sup>18</sup>

However, Griffin did not find Lucknow on his own, he was brought there at the invitation of Mr Alla Gopan. Gopan was a friend of Ronald Craig, who also shared an acquaintance with Griffin, and Craig had just taken up the position of editor to the Pioneer Press. Gopan was a building contractor. Confronted by complications during his construction of a Buddhist temple, Craig suggested that Griffin might help Gopan out of his difficulties. Chance then turned to good fortune. Gopan knew the Head Librarian of Lucknow University, and so Gopan suggested that Griffin submit some designs for the new library that the university wished to build. It was suggested that Griffin submit two designs that might be compared: different to an extent that one should look “European” and “completely modern”, and the other “with an Indian feeling”. Griffin accepted the challenge though he only submitted one design for the Library (figure 11).

Griffin’s response was calculated to bring him to India, and it did. Gopan wired Griffin: “Plans accepted, come at first boat” and then he followed with the





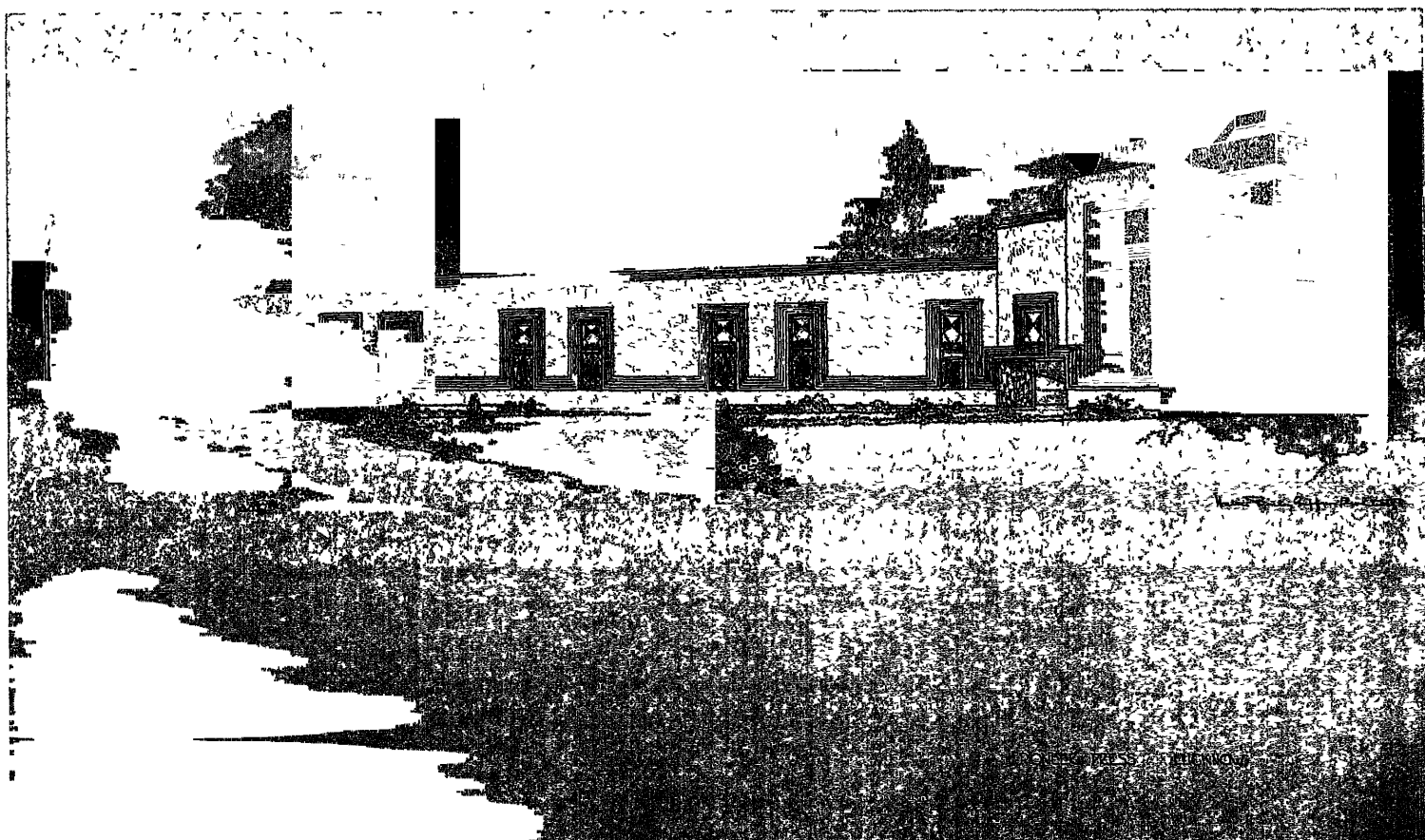
LUCKNOW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

11

Design of 1936 for Lucknow University Library, by Walter Burley Griffin. Collection of Avery Library, Columbia University.

12

Design of 1936 for the Pioneer Press Building, by Walter Burley Griffin. Collection of Avery Library, Columbia University.



offer of making Griffin the architect consultant, in a building company he had formed. Griffin wired back that he would come to Lucknow, and from there Gopan's impressive contacts with the Raja of Mahmudabad and other landed notables, poets, bankers, and politicians in Lucknow quickly led to a virtual avalanche of commissions. Donald Johnson's formidable research and highly readable volume on Griffin observes that such popularity was not only due to Griffin's talents, but also because there may only have been one other practising architect in the city, "a young Muslim trained at Glasgow University" as Griffin described him. In any case, regardless of the possible competition or lack thereof, at Lucknow, Griffin proved to be a prolific designer during his tenure in the city (figure 12). Equally clearly, he never interpreted his own perception that few rivals existed there as an opportunity that would allow him to "slough-off". Indeed, to understand and comprehend the extent of Griffin's output in the short space of time he had at Lucknow, before his untimely death, a list of all his built works for the city has been provided (see Inventory). Of these, a few works have been selected for illustration. Remarkably, Griffin also managed to make yet more designs for other locales in India, during his all too brief tenure there.

### Conclusion

A familiarity with what amounts to a continuous tradition of Western style architecture from the mid-18th through the mid-20th century should help extend our understanding of Lucknow's importance for architectural innovation within India. The present article only deals with about the last hundred years of that cycle. This is due to my perception that most people are less familiar with the period examined here than with earlier structures. If one combines the court at Lucknow's abiding interest in

European architecture with the output which resulted from its own and then British patronage, the entirety seems to dovetail into one another in a fairly seamless whole. In each era there was unusual architectural innovation, and yet when considered with an open mind, the design innovations achieved overall comprise a striking legacy for the city. Griffin's work is particularly outstanding and singular within India, but the earlier work discussed here is also of great quality and integrity. I earnestly hope that identification and greater familiarity with these buildings will lead to their protection and conservation for future generations. The loss of the Pioneer Press Building, in recent years, is deeply regrettable. Lucknow is a city blessed with a splendid past, but clearly it has been, and shall be in the years ahead, confronted with great pressures on its historic fabric.

### NOTES

1. "Hasienabad", *The Builder*, Vol. 49 (1885), pp. 169-70
2. G H R Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture*, Yale University Press, London, 1989, pp 6-12.
3. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *A Fatal Friendship, the Nawabs, the British and the City of Lucknow*, OUP, Delhi, 1985, pp. 153-54.
4. Llewellyn-Jones, p. 40.
5. Philip Davies, *The Penguin Guide to the Monuments of India*, Vol. II, Viking, London, 1989, p. 236.
6. Bayne was an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects (ARIBA) and was made a Fellow (FRIBA) in 1891.
7. *The Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta Conception, Collections, and Conservation*, edited by Philippa Vaughan, Vol. 49 No. 2, December 1997
8. *The Builder*, 1877, pp. 133-36.
9. Davies, p. 244.
10. Lishman trained under Charles J. Ferguson FSA for ten years in Carlisle, Cumbria. When Ferguson suddenly fell ill Lishman carried on his projects. Lishman did the architectural designs and the ground plan used for the Banaras Hindu University, which drew on the Vedas for inspiration. He also designed Allahabad's High Court (1916).





11. James Ransome, *Government of India Building Designs*, London, no publisher, 1909, plate XXVIII
12. Edward Hilton, *The Tourist's Guide to Lucknow*, 9th edition, 1916, Lucknow, pp. xxi–xxii
13. Davies, p 240
14. The Amir-ud-daula Public Library was “founded by the Taluqdars of Oudh in memory of the late Amir-ud-Daula Said-ul-Mihr, the Hon’ble Amir-ud-daula Raja Mahmudabad, Amir Hassan Khan of Mahmudabad, a former President of the British India Association” according to a plaque dated January 22, 1921 in the entrance hall.
- 15 C.H Reilly, *Representative British Architects*, BT Batsford, London, 1931, p 120
16. Donald Johnson, *The Architecture of Walter Burley Griffin*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1977, p 129

17. Marion Mahony Griffin joined her husband, having left Sydney and the practice they had established there at the end of April 1936 Shockingly, eight months later, in February 1937, Griffin died suddenly of peritonitis, after surgery. He is buried in the Nishatganj cemetery, near Paper Mill Colony.

18 This and subsequent quotes relating to Griffin are from Johnson, pp. 126–29.

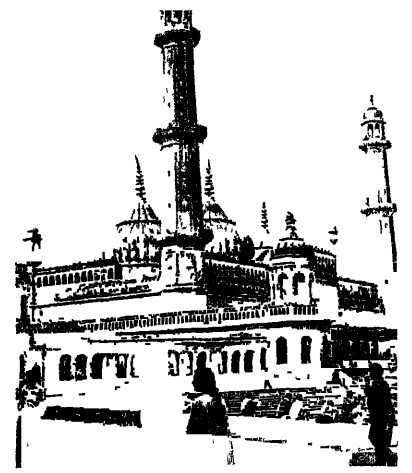
#### Figure Acknowledgements

Figures 1–10 courtesy The British Library, London, Oriental and India Office Collections; figures 11 and 12 courtesy Avery Library, Columbia University, New York

#### Inventory of projects and buildings by Walter Burley Griffin in and around Lucknow

1. University of Lucknow Campus Plan, Extension – November 1936, partially implemented
2. The Pioneer Press Office and Works, 20 Vidhan Sabha Marg, Lucknow 1936–39, demolished
3. Dr and Mrs Shanti Devi Bahtia House, New Civil Lines, adjacent to the University, completed in June 1936
4. Mrs Mohammed Raza Residence, Clyde Road (now Rana Pratap Marg), 1936/37
5. Dr N.K. Mathur House, 1936, partially realized, present status not known
6. Hosain Residence, Plot 18, Havelock Road, present status not known
7. Capital Theatre, Vidhan Sabha Marg, June 1936 – interiors vary from drawings, but it survives as a cinema
8. Victoria Park Pumping Station Building, Lucknow, located on the north–south brick channelled stream in Victoria Park, built for the United Provinces Exhibition in 1936/37
9. United Provinces Exhibition of Industry and Agriculture, Victoria Park, 1936/37 – many drawings; this project was built, but was a temporary exhibition
10. Raja Kathwara Residence, 1 Pragnar Marg, Lucknow, 1936, now a Teachers’ Union headquarters
11. Lucknow Club Building, off Vidhan Sabha Marg, 1936, extant
12. Canopy for King George V Memorial, opposite the GPO in Hazratganj, now houses statue of Mahatma Gandhi, designed with Marion Mahony Griffin
13. Lucknow University Library, 1935/36 – several drawings, foundation stone laid, building finished after Griffin’s death by Mr Narkelar of Bombay, who substituted his own elevations, but mostly retained Griffin’s floor plan
14. Zenana Palace for the Raja of Jahangirabad, Jahangirabad, 1936–37, extant
15. Students’ Union, Lucknow University, project
16. Dr Sahni Residence, Lucknow, February 1936–37, project
17. Mr Gupta Residence, Lucknow, 1936–37, project for alterations, address unknown
18. Subdivision for Dr Bahtia, Lucknow, 1936–37, project
19. Pirthi Nath Bhargava residence (bungalow and zenana), Lucknow, 1936, project for alterations, address unknown
20. Brother of P.N. Bhargava Residence, Lucknow, 1936, project for alterations, address unknown
21. Mr Mohsin Residence, Lucknow, 1936–37, project
22. Oudh Club House, Lucknow, 1936, project
23. Couper Paper Mill, Lucknow, 1936, project
24. Library and Museum for the Raja of Mahmudabad, 1936, project
25. Mosque for the Raja of Mahmudabad, 1936, project
26. Offices and Stores for unknown owner, project

# Lucknow's Imambaras and Karbalas



*Neeta Das*

## **The “New” Building Type for the Shia Nawabs**

For the nawabs and other newly-formed aristocracy, architecture was a physical manifestation of their status. The new rulers of Lucknow wanted an architecture that not only symbolized their dominance in Awadh, but also showed their severance from the Mughals. They built much in Lucknow including the important imambara and karbala complexes (figure 1). In India, an overwhelming majority of Muslims were Sunni including the Mughal rulers, thus the Sunni form of Islam was practised and patronized. On the other hand, the Shia sect of Islam was subdued. However, the founder of the Nawabi dynasty (Saadat Khan, Burhan-ul-Mulk, 1722–39) was a Shia from Iran as were the subsequent nawabs. To immortalize this freedom of faith, the later nawabs erected imambaras (buildings where Muharram is commemorated), and karbalas (shrines or burial places), both of which were essential and peculiar to the Shiite way of life.<sup>1</sup>

## **Muharram: Rituals, Objects, and Buildings**

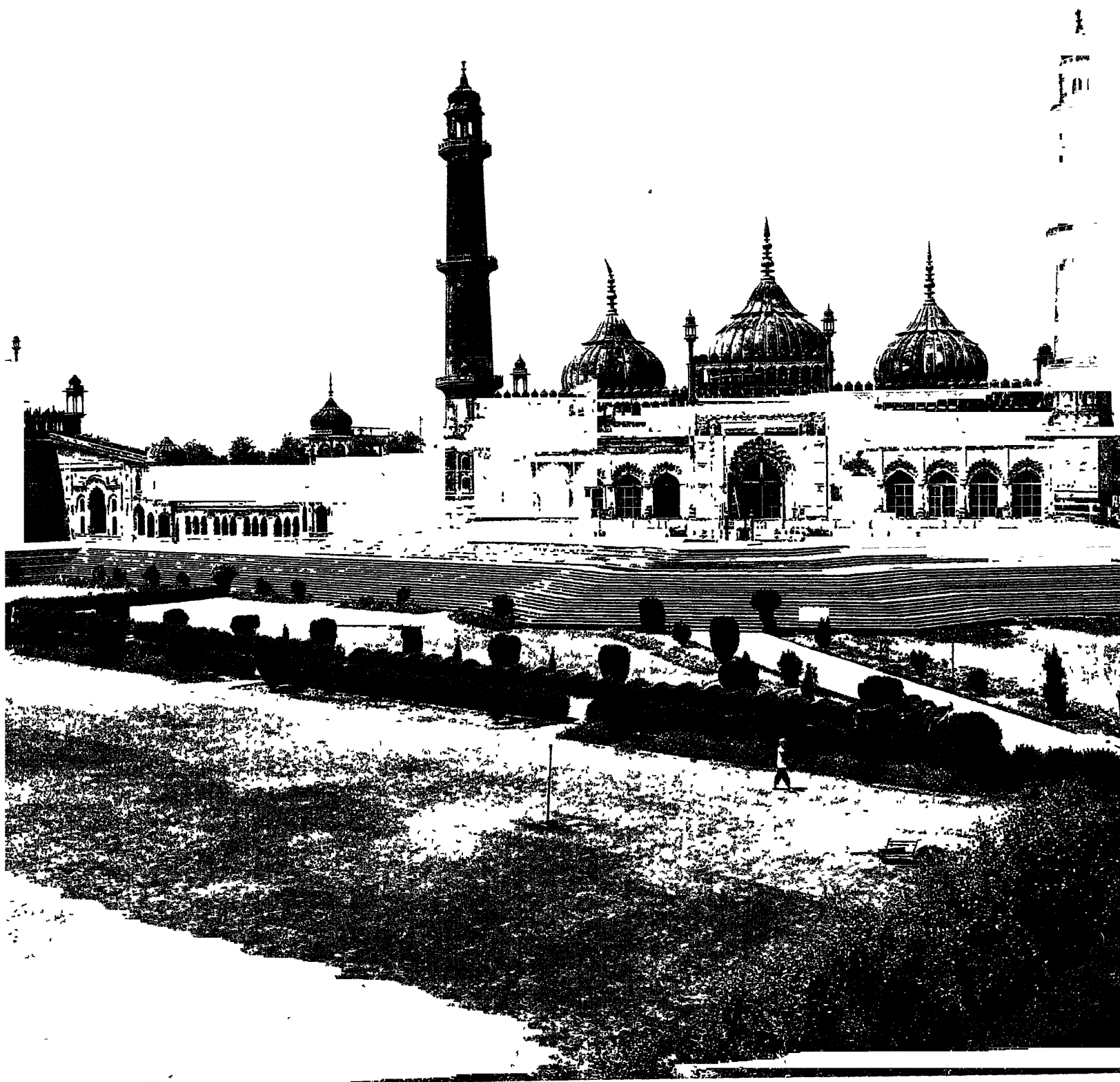
The battle of Karbala is commemorated every year as Muharram, the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar. The rituals associated with Muharram are performed in the first ten days of that month, beginning with Imam Hussain's arrival at Karbala and ending with his death (martyrdom) on the tenth day, named Ashura, the day of tears. During this time, the painful experience of Imam Hussain at Karbala is recreated and relived by the people. In the mourning period many activities are performed which can be broadly classified in two parts, the mourning procession or julus, and stationary mourning or matam majlis, also called rauzakhwani (reciting the praises of Imam Hussain).

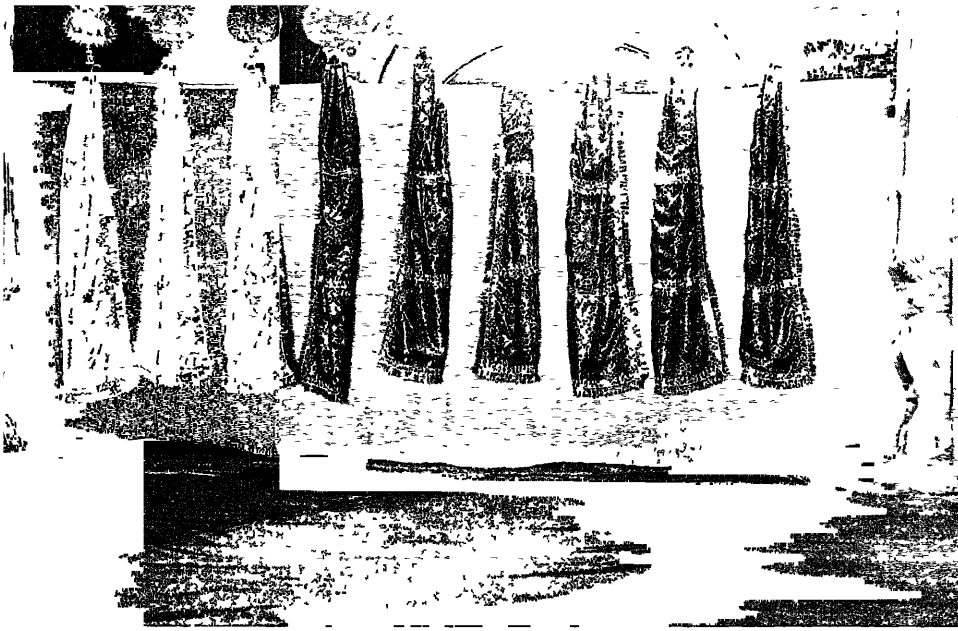
The julus is the major mourning procession of Muharram. This procession signifies two different journeys: first, of Imam Hussain, from Mecca to Karbala in order to fight against injustice, and second, of his relatives from Karbala to Damascus, after the defeat at the battle of Karbala. The julus usually starts from

**1 a,b**

Bara (Asafi) Imambara,  
mosque and complex.  
Photographs: Lt-Col. Anil  
Mehrotra.







2  
Alams in the Bara  
Imambara. Photograph:  
Lt-Col. Anil Mehrotra.

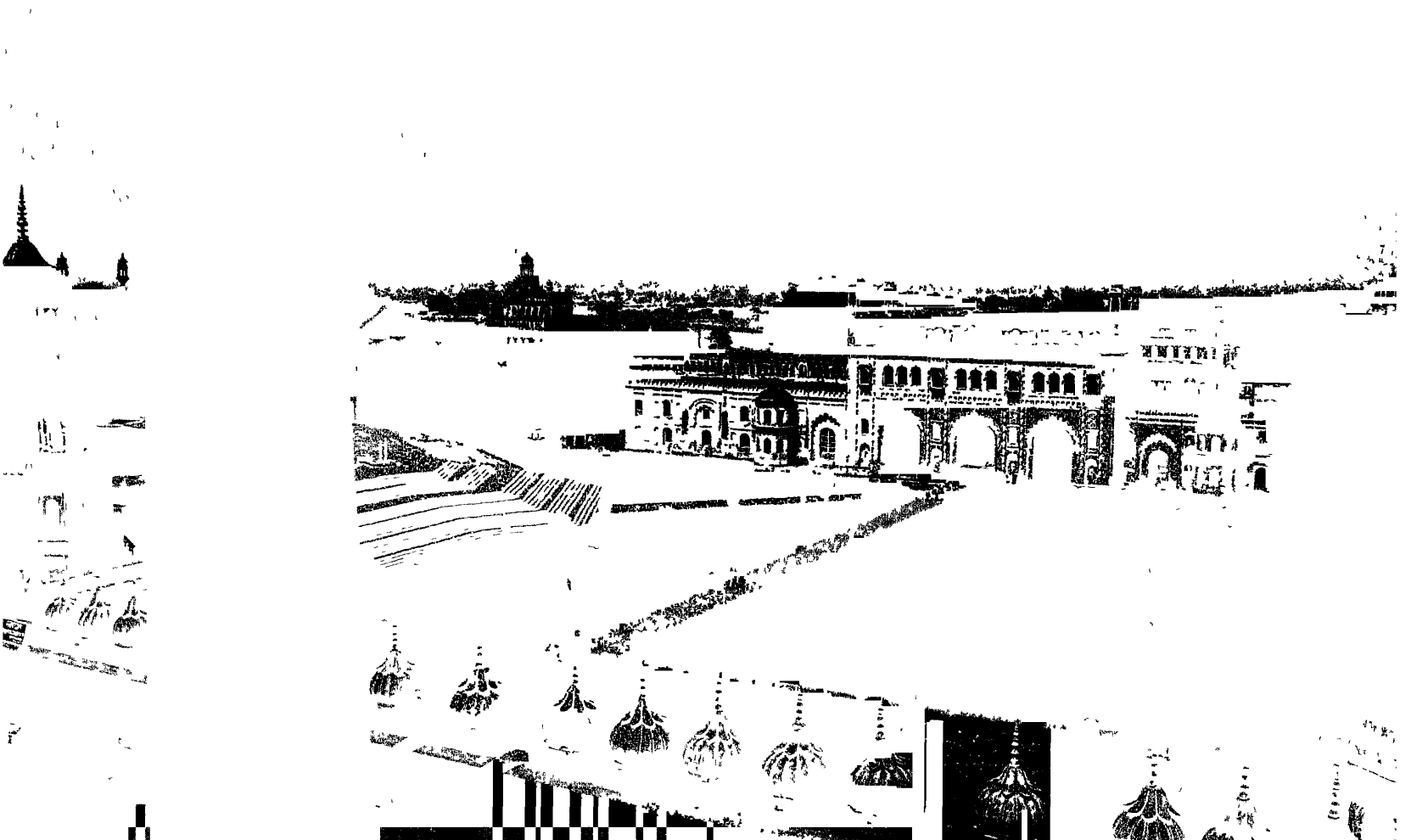
3  
Forecourt of the Bara  
Imambara. Photograph:  
Lt-Col. Anil Mehrotra.

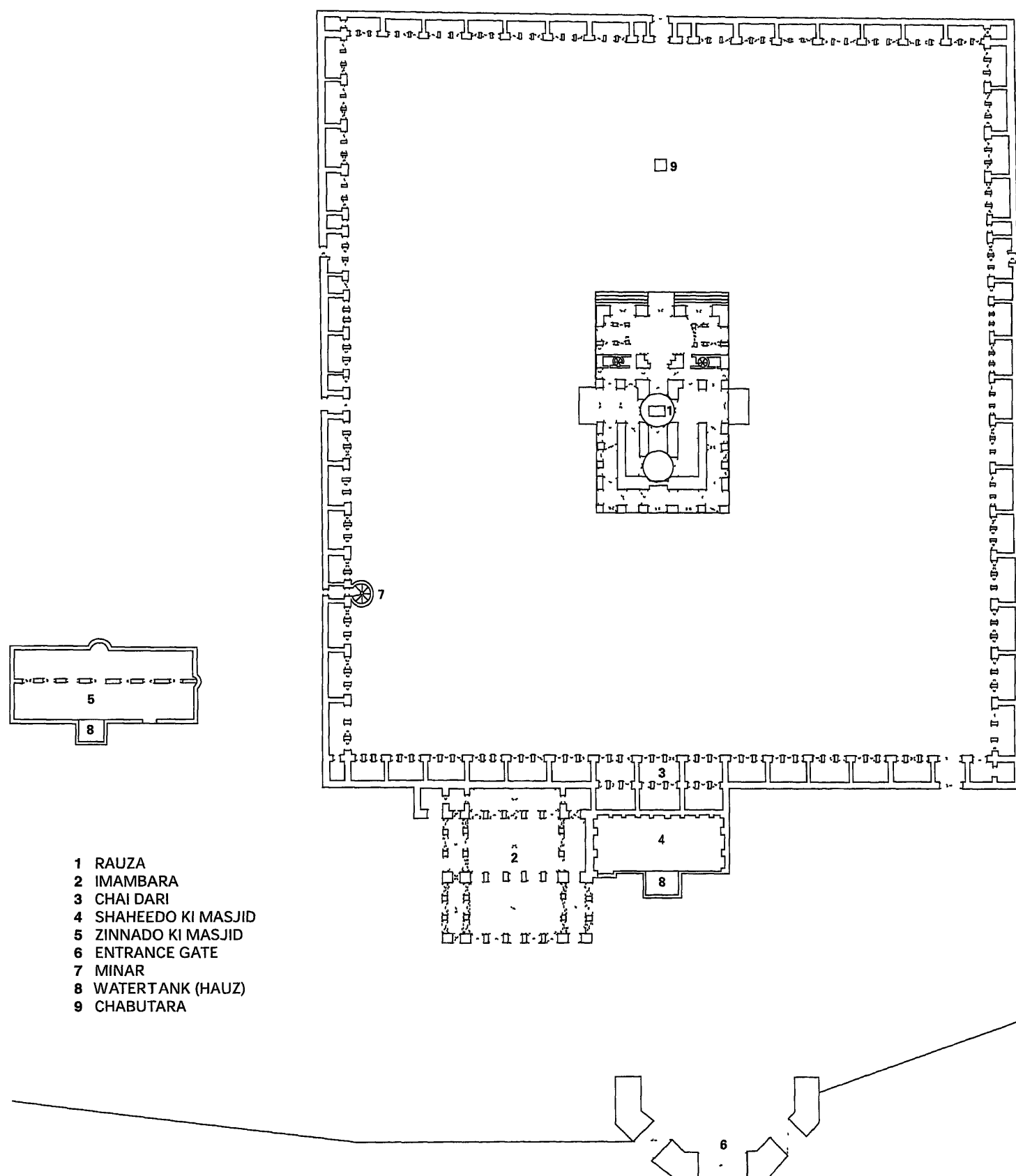
various settlements and meets in an important open space. Accompanied with ritual objects associated with the battle at Karbala, such as the tabut (coffin) or tazia (model tomb), zarih (sarcophagus), and alam (standard, figure 2), the participants walk barefoot, wearing black clothes, and torturing themselves with knives and chains. They moan the mourning recitations of Muharram to the

accompaniment of matam (elegies) and the rest of the community participates from the sides. The julus terminates at the karbala complex, which represents the site where the battle was fought and Imam Hussain's army was martyred. The ritual objects are also buried here at the end of Muharram.

Majlis is the mourning in one place by a group of people. Various individual artists excite the emotions of the gathering through poetry and prose to induce in them a unity of feeling for the martyrs. The presentation refers to the dramatic narration of the life, deeds, and sufferings of the imams and other Shia martyrs. This is usually performed in an enclosed space identified as Hosseiniye, Azakhana, Taziagah, Imambaragah, Imamkhana, or Ashurkhana along with the imambara (figure 3).

The tazia is the most prominent among ritual objects used in the Muharram observances. Imam Hussain's tomb is represented by the tazia, which is a replica





of his domed tomb at Karbala. In size, details, and materials they vary radically and could be permanent or temporary. The permanent ones are made of wood, ivory, glass, silver, etc. whereas the temporary are made of bamboo covered with red and green paper. They may vary

in height from a few inches to about twelve feet. The tazias, both temporary and permanent, are housed in the imambara but only the temporary ones are buried during Muharram at the karbala.

Imambaras have played an important part in Shia life and even the

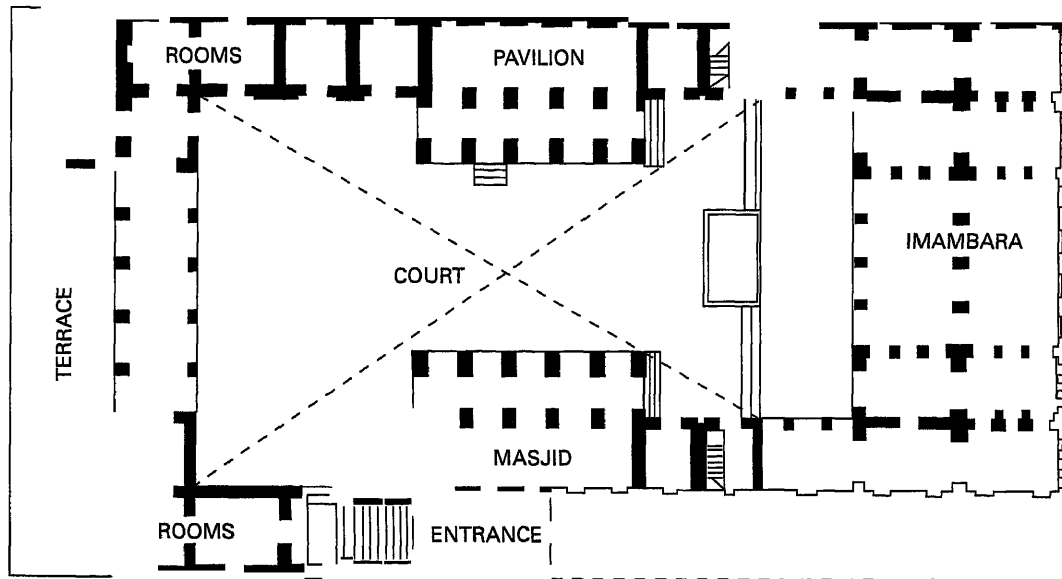
4  
Ground plan of the  
Talkatora Karbala,  
constructed 1798.  
Source: Neeta Das.

poorest household would have a place of honour set aside as an imambara, even if it is a small niche in the wall covered with a black curtain where a few humble objects and scriptures are placed. Wealthier families have allocated rooms for this purpose with a raised platform, the shah-nishin, where the tazia is placed. It was considered an act of charity by the affluent Shias to make large imambara and karbala complexes and

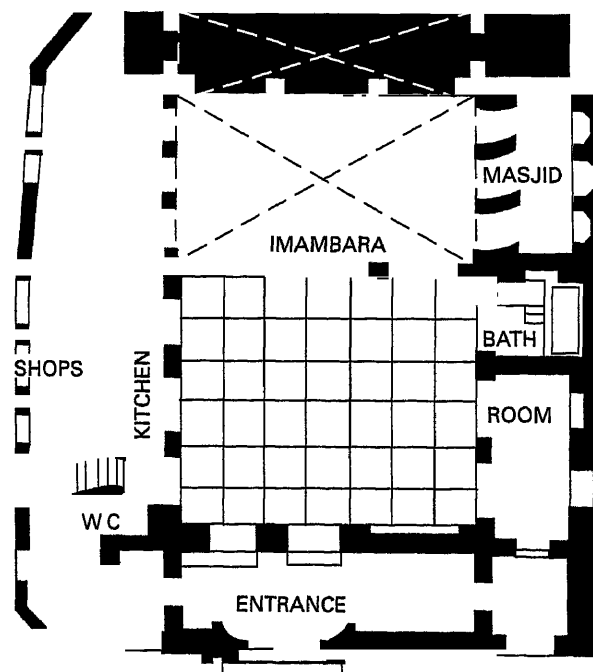
organize the Muharram functions. The imambara complexes usually include a mosque, the tombs of the patrons and other structures, which may be residential or communal. Excluding the namaaz (prayer) that is performed in the mosques, all other activities were held here.<sup>2</sup>

The tomb of Imam Hussain in Iraq is the most important Shia shrine in the world, and for many Shias the

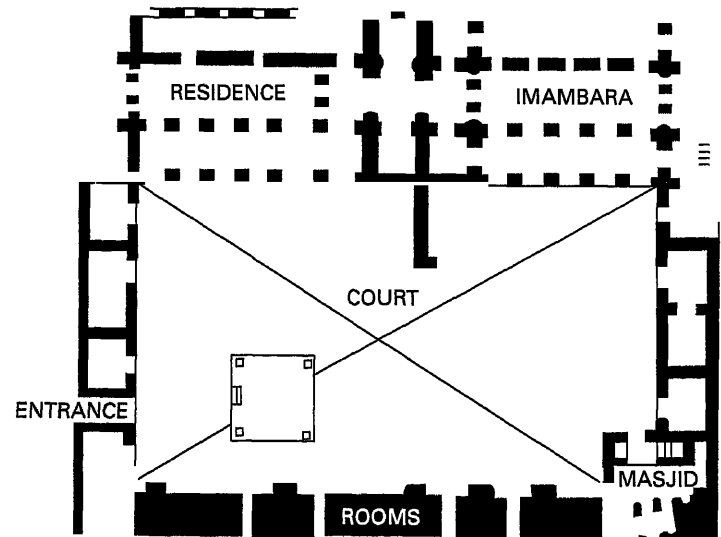
Deputy Sahib ka Imambara



Jannat ki Khirki



Faqr Manzil



pilgrimage to Karbala is a life-long goal, as important as Mecca and Medina. Shias who cannot do so, often request the pilgrims to carry the remains of their dead relatives who wished to be buried near the tomb of Imam Hussain at Karbala. Karbalas made as “true copies” of the tombs of the imams, are used as Shia cemeteries, as well as being the burial sites for tazias. Built in the Iraqi style of architecture they come to life during Muharram when the place is full of mourning devotees. The karbala shrine is enclosed within a large courtyard space (figure 4). The tazias kept during Muharram in the imambaras are buried within the complex on the tenth day. To one side is a structure representing the qatlgah (site of martyrdom) where the Imam’s throat was said to have been cut.

### **The Imambaras of Lucknow**

There are innumerable imambaras in Lucknow and it is difficult to name just a few. However, some have gained importance over others by virtue of having some extraordinary feature or status. Others, though important, have been deleted because they either have vanished or have been altered beyond recognition and therefore no longer have any architectural significance. The Imambara of Almas Ali Khan (a powerful official) was a huge complex but today housing has come up inside it and destroyed the building. The Ghufra Mahal, the Nazim, and the Kala (Black) Imambaras are among the earliest to have been built in Lucknow but very little of their original structure is left today.

Outside Lucknow, in Faizabad, the imambara within the Gulab Bari, the tomb of Nawab Shuja-ud-daula (1754–75), is a forerunner to those of Lucknow. The tomb of the nawab is placed in the centre of a charbagh, a Mughal-style four-square garden, with a mosque and imambara placed symmetrically on both sides of the entrance gate. Facing the entrance gate is the residence of the nawab. This is one of

the first known such complexes in India to have an imambara.

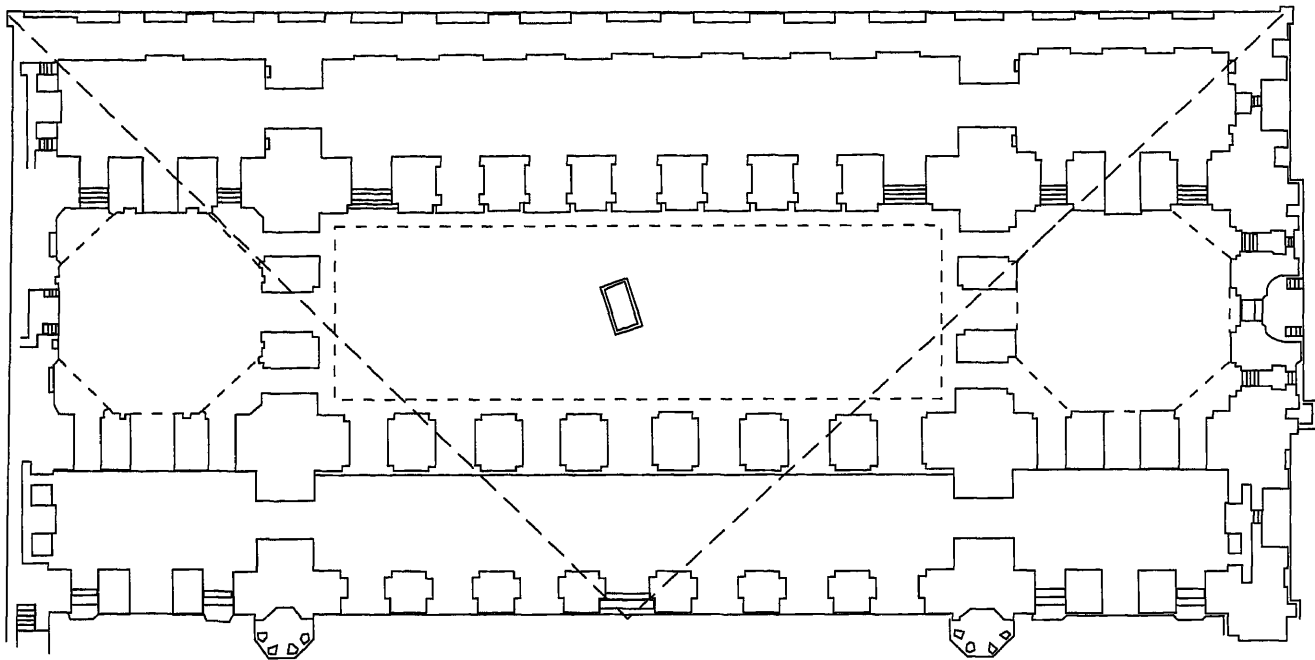
Imambaras in Lucknow can be divided into two kinds; those for public use and those built within residences. The latter, usually of the rich, like the Faqr Manzil, the Deputy Sahib ka Imambara, and the Jannat ki Khirki are primarily for the use of women. Here the imambara and the mosque become an integral part of the house design (figure 5), which gives it a distinctive Shia character. The major features of the imambara, that is, the shah-nashin or “royal seat” in an arched niche, and the majlisi or gathering area, are still clearly defined.<sup>3</sup>

The imambaras for public use are much bigger than the residential ones. The Asafi Imambara, often called the Bara (Great) Imambara, is the grandest and probably among the first imambaras which became the prototype of those built later. It was built over the period 1784 to 1791 and commissioned by Nawab Asaf-ud-daula. The architect of the complex was Kifayat-ullah Shahjahanabadi of Delhi. Some scholars mention that the nawab had a design competition for the Imambara and Kifayat-ullah’s design was chosen for the purpose.<sup>4</sup> The Bara Imambara was supposedly built to provide work and income to the famine-hit citizens of Lucknow. For the whole building the craftsmen of Lucknow used lakhori (a small, thin brick), and white stucco plaster, to imitate stone. The bricks are laid in different ways to form circular shapes, and foliation of arches. Again, like all Islamic buildings that abhor figuration of any sort, imambaras and karbalas are decorated with elements of calligraphy, geometry, and foliage.

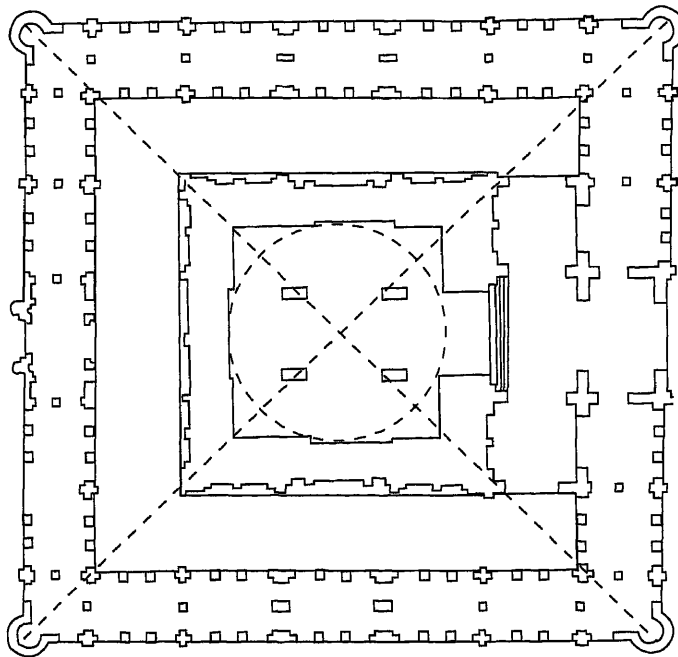
Old maps of Lucknow indicate that the Bara Imambara was located next to the Macchi Bhawan fort where the earlier nawabs used to stay. Along with the imambara is a stepwell or baoli. It is improbable that this well was built as



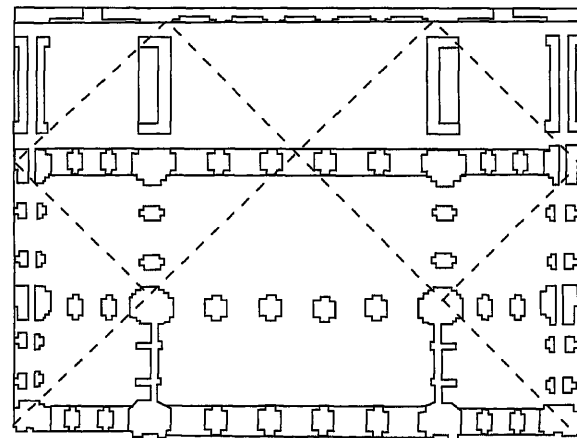
**Asafi Imambara**



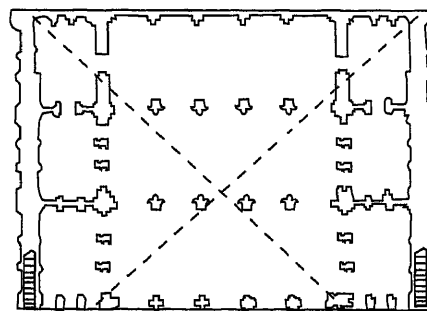
**Shah Najaf Imambara**



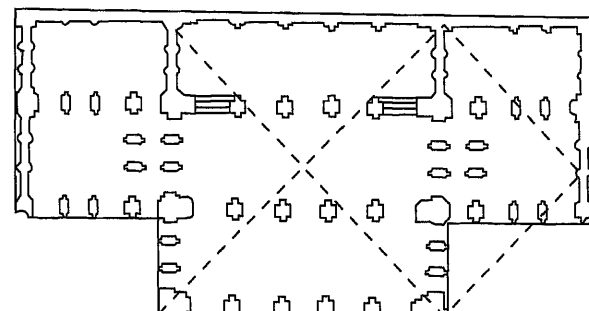
**Siptainabad Imambara**



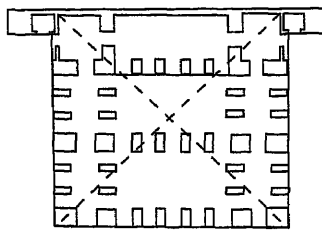
**Imambara Mughal Sahiba**

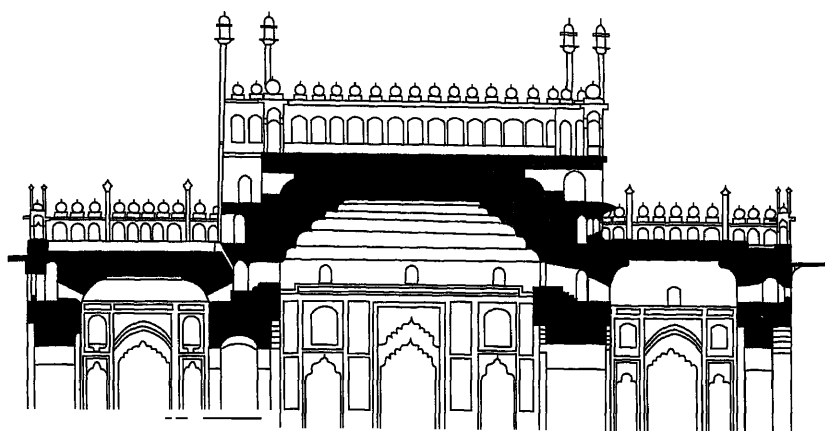


**Hussainabad Imambara**

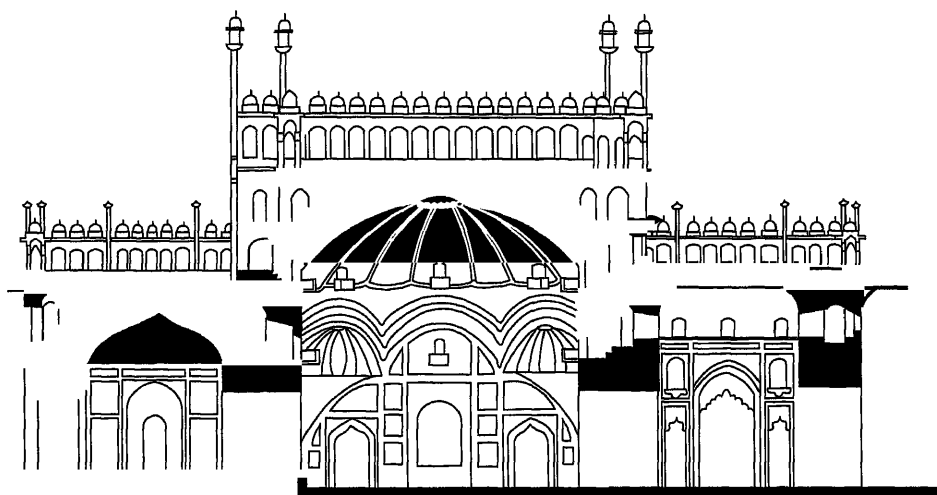


**Talkatora Imambara**





Section through central hall



Section through side halls

7

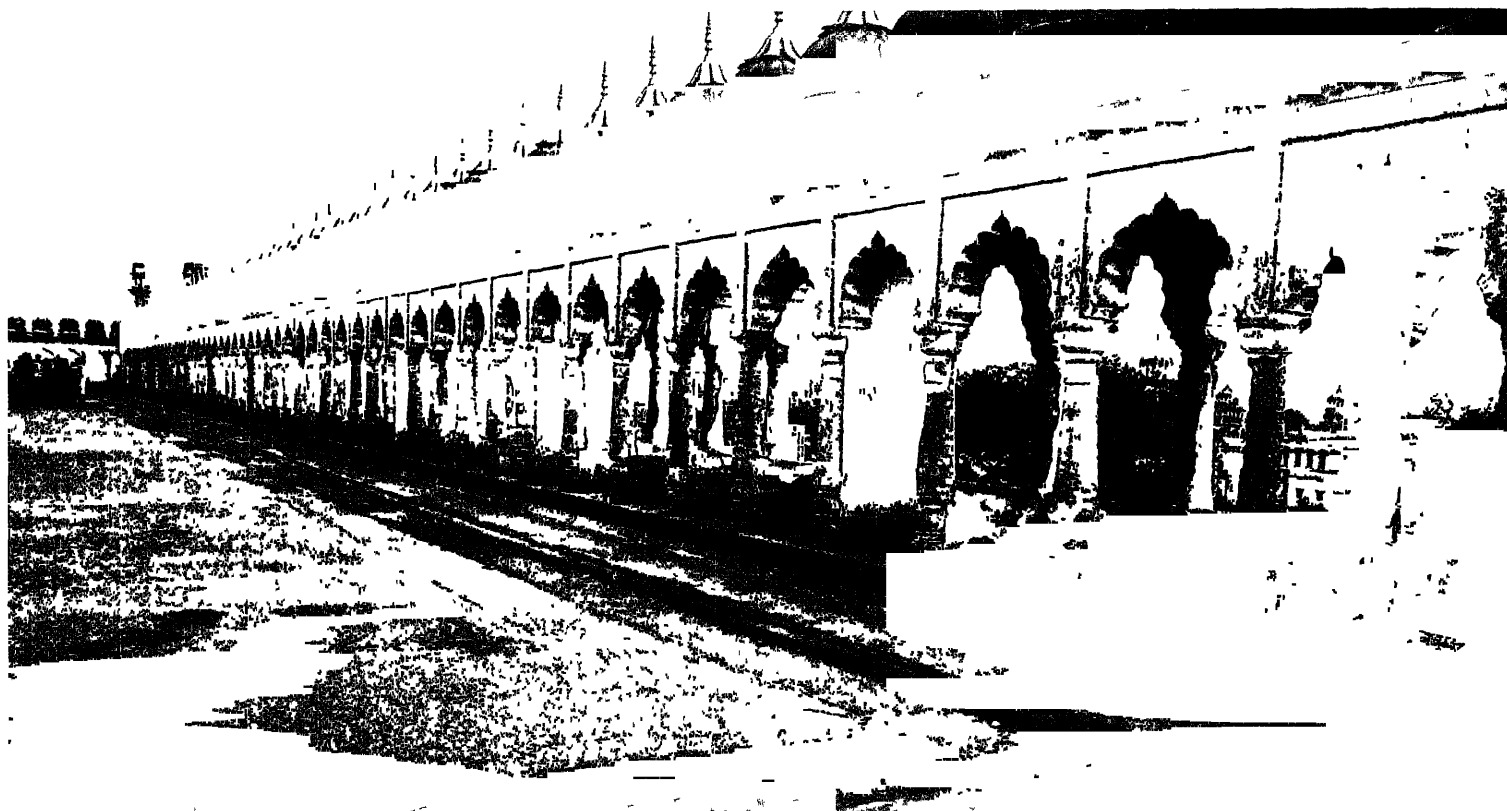
Section through Bara Imambara, showing the roofing system of the central hall and side halls. Source: Neeta Das.

part of the imambara complex, as many such wells can be seen in Mughal and pre-Mughal forts, but it may have been repaired and developed upon. The complex was entered through the Rumi Darwaza (Turkish Gate), which was, like the stepwell, built over an old fort gate when the whole complex was made.

Moving up a stepped plinth, the Bara Imambara looms large and linear. Its façade is divided into three parts, the central bay punctuated by semicircular projections, and the two sides a little recessed from the centre. There are seven arched openings in the central bay and one in each of the side bays. The upper portion of the façade is further articulated by a series of arched openings and a chhatri (domed pavilion or cupola) or kiosk-like parapet.

The building can be entered through any of the arched openings. It is divided into nine parts, including the entrance hall, which is used for matam and majlis; a long hall, with a mimbar or pulpit at one end; the main hall with a large vaulted roof and a continuous balcony at an upper level, which houses the tomb of Nawab Asaf-ud-daula and his wife; the raised platform where the tazias are kept; the side halls off the central bay are more or less square in plan and have shallow domed roofs, with small balconies of no apparent use (figure 7). A side staircase for the podium outside leads to the terrace above the imambara. At roof level there are narrow passages and small staircases, which are labyrinthine in character.

The Bara Imambara complex has many peculiarities and follies of a "first"



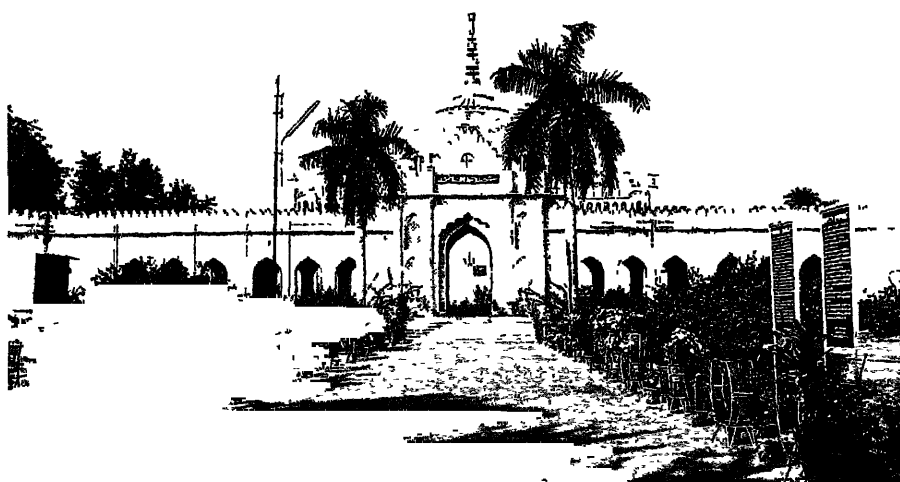
8  
The roof of the Bara  
Imambara Photograph:  
Lt-Col. Anil Mehrotra.

prototype. The major one of these is the location of the mosque within the complex (figure 6). All Islamic builders are well aware of the qibla orientation of the mosque (in the direction of Mecca), but in this case not only does this axuality strike a discord with that of the Bara Imambara, the sheer size of the same juxtaposes the two in a dynamic relationship with two dominant axes. This condition was probably unacceptable, hence is not repeated in the later imambara complexes where the mosque is either reduced in size and

importance or the whole complex is oriented in the qibla direction so that the whole is symmetrically placed along the central axis. Secondly, the complex lacks cohesion of its parts and the elements like the cloisters and gateways that join each other can be seen as separate units rather than parts of a whole.

Finally, the monumental size of the Bara Imambara must have also posed a problem for the builders. The surface decoration is out of scale in proportion to the size of the building, and the roofing system here is unique. The central hall of the imambara is almost 50 metres long and over 16 metres wide and covered by a barrel vault. Not only is such a large structure difficult to construct, it is difficult to treat in elevation. The builders overcame this problem by making a maze-like masonry structure along the wall length on the edges of the vault, today called *bhul bhulaiyan*. This honeycombing made the structure lighter and also produced a flat, usable terrace much easier to treat than a façade (figure 8). All later imambaras with very large roofs were either covered by a dome or had smaller spans with flat roofs. Smaller

9  
Shah Najaf Imambara.  
Photograph: Lt-Col Anil  
Mehrotra



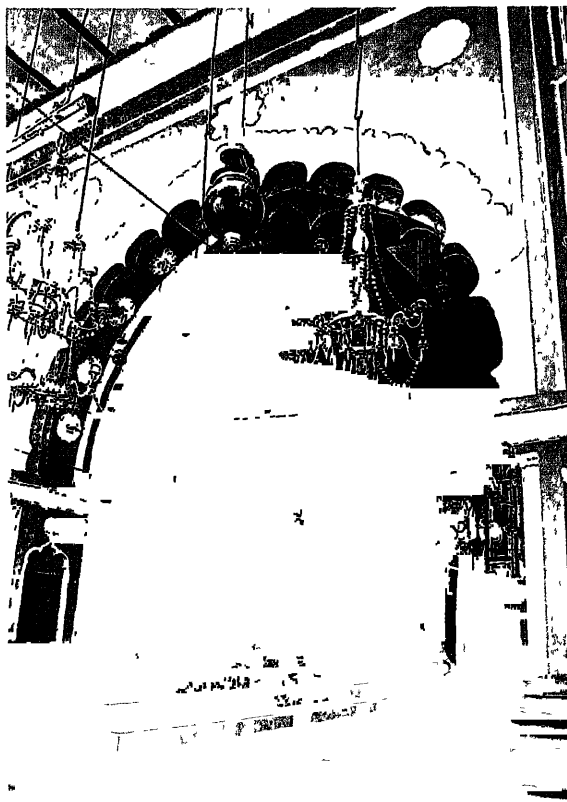
imambaras also did not have a problem of articulation and decoration.

The large imambaras, unlike the karbalas, have elaborate gardens within their courtyards. One is prompted to compare them with the charbagh or paradise gardens of Mughal times. The gardens of the Lucknow imambaras have flowers and fruit shrubs, waterways, and fountains, but they lack the structuring of a four-part plan, which is essential for a paradise garden.

The Shah Najaf Imambara was commissioned by Nawab Ghazi-ud-din Haider (r. 1814–27). It also forms a burial place for him and his three wives. It is supposed to be a copy of the tomb of Imam Ali at Najaf, in present-day Iraq. Unlike the Bara Imambara, this is an impressive square domed structure, set within a large courtyard, and more like a tomb (figures 9–11). The central domed hall is used as the shah-nishin and for the tombs of the founders. A large hall extends beyond it, which works as the majlisi. Again, unlike the Bara Imambara, it has a very small mosque, which does not undermine the presence of the main structure.

However, it was the Hussainabad Imambara, also called the Chota (Small) Imambara, commissioned during the rule of Nawab Muhammad Ali Shah (r. 1837–42), which solved the basic follies of the Bara Imambara while keeping the essence alive (figures 12 and 13). It was much smaller than the Bara Imambara, and had a domed central hall. The mosque has also been reduced in size. This problem of axiality was solved in the later imambaras when they were also tilted towards the west, thereby dissolving the juxtaposed qibla axis of the mosque and the centrality of the imambara. Most importantly, the Hussainabad Imambara presents to the onlooker a well-designed symmetrical complex with the building sitting at the end of a beautifully landscaped courtyard, with water elements, and flanked on both sides by similar buildings, one being the tomb of the nawab's daughter and the other providing a symmetry to the same. The cloisters surrounding the court have a bath or hammam and a stable along with many rooms.

Other than the nawabs, the begums of Lucknow were also prolific builders



10  
Entrance to Shah Najaf  
Imambara. Photograph:  
Lt-Col. Anil Mehrotra.

11  
Shah Najaf Imambara,  
dome and candelabra.  
Photograph, Lt-Col. Anil  
Mehrotra.



12  
Entrance to the  
Hussainabad Imambara  
with black and white  
calligraphy used as a  
decorative element.  
Photograph: Lt-Col. Anil  
Mehrotra.

and many imambaras were built by or for them. These include the Imambaras Mughal Sahiba (figure 14) and Malika Zamania. They are both smaller versions of the Bara Imambara with a three-bay plan, a five- or seven-bay façade, and flat roofs with beautifully stuccoed walls. The majlisi and shah-nishin are clearly defined, as in other imambaras, and these imambaras were usually a part of their mahalserai, or female quarters within the palace complexes.

#### The Lucknow Karbalas

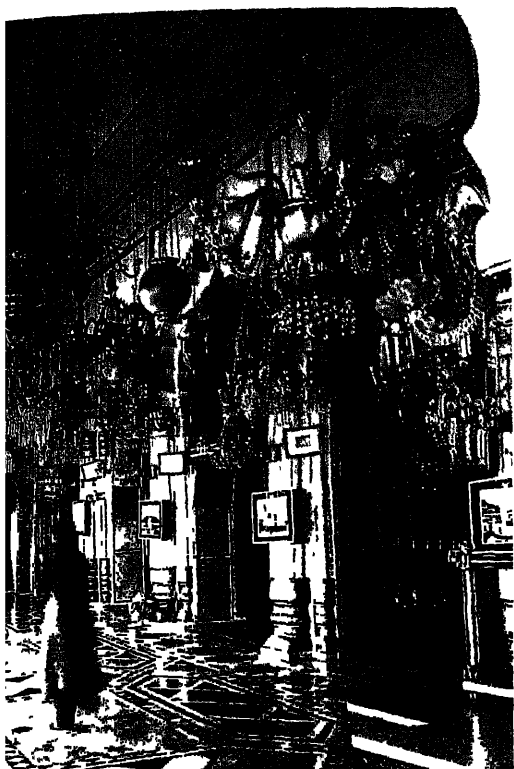
There are many karbalas in Lucknow but the Talkatora Karbala (to the west of Alambagh Road), is among the most famous (figure 15). Khuda Baksh Khan, a nobleman in the court of Nawab Saadat

Ali Khan, built it about 1798. The complex is situated away from the city and its compound is reached through a large vaulted gateway. It has, along with the symbolic tomb of Imam Hussain, two mosques, and an imambara. It is also used as a cemetery. A six-roomed structure grouped with the imambara and the mosque is the chaidari, where the family members of the builder are buried.

The external face of this karbala is seen as a single large complex with bare, unadorned walls, but with a highly ornate imambara and an open mosque as appendages, and a minaret terminating the complex. Going round this wall, one enters the karbala courtyard through an arched gateway. The main shrine of plain, whitewashed stucco, is situated in the centre of the courtyard, bounded by arched cloisters and punctuated by large gateways. The central dome above it is flanked by two minarets, with a third dome at the back, to mark the mihrab, the arched niche in the qibla wall. The inside of the shrine belies its exterior and is exquisitely decorated with colourful stucco patterns. The whole interior is lighted up mysteriously with filtered lights coming in from the screened windows. Devotees can move around the shrine as a narrow passage has been left all around the central domed space.

The Kazmain Karbala and the Azimullah Karbala (both built by nobles at the court of Nawab Muhammad Ali Shah), are two other important religious complexes. The large Kazmain Karbala, built by Sharf-ud-daula, is a copy of the tomb of the seventh Imam, Musa Kazim, near Baghdad (figure 16). It has within its large cloistered courtyard a representational tomb and a small domeless mosque called the Masjid-e-Kufa, which is supposed to be a true copy of the mosque where Imam Ali was killed. On one side is the shrine to a cousin of Imam Hussain, who was also martyred at Kufa. The Azimullah Karbala, named after its founder,

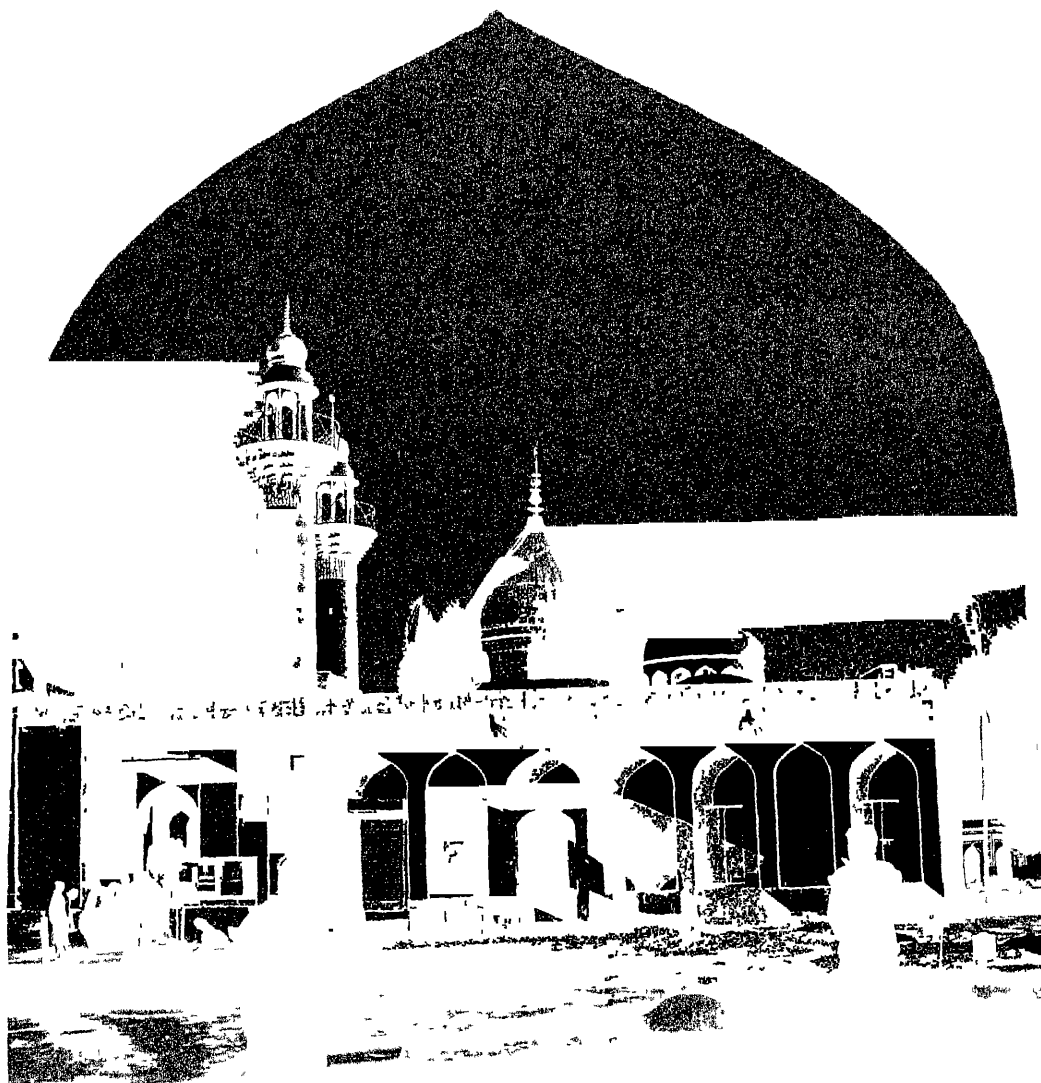




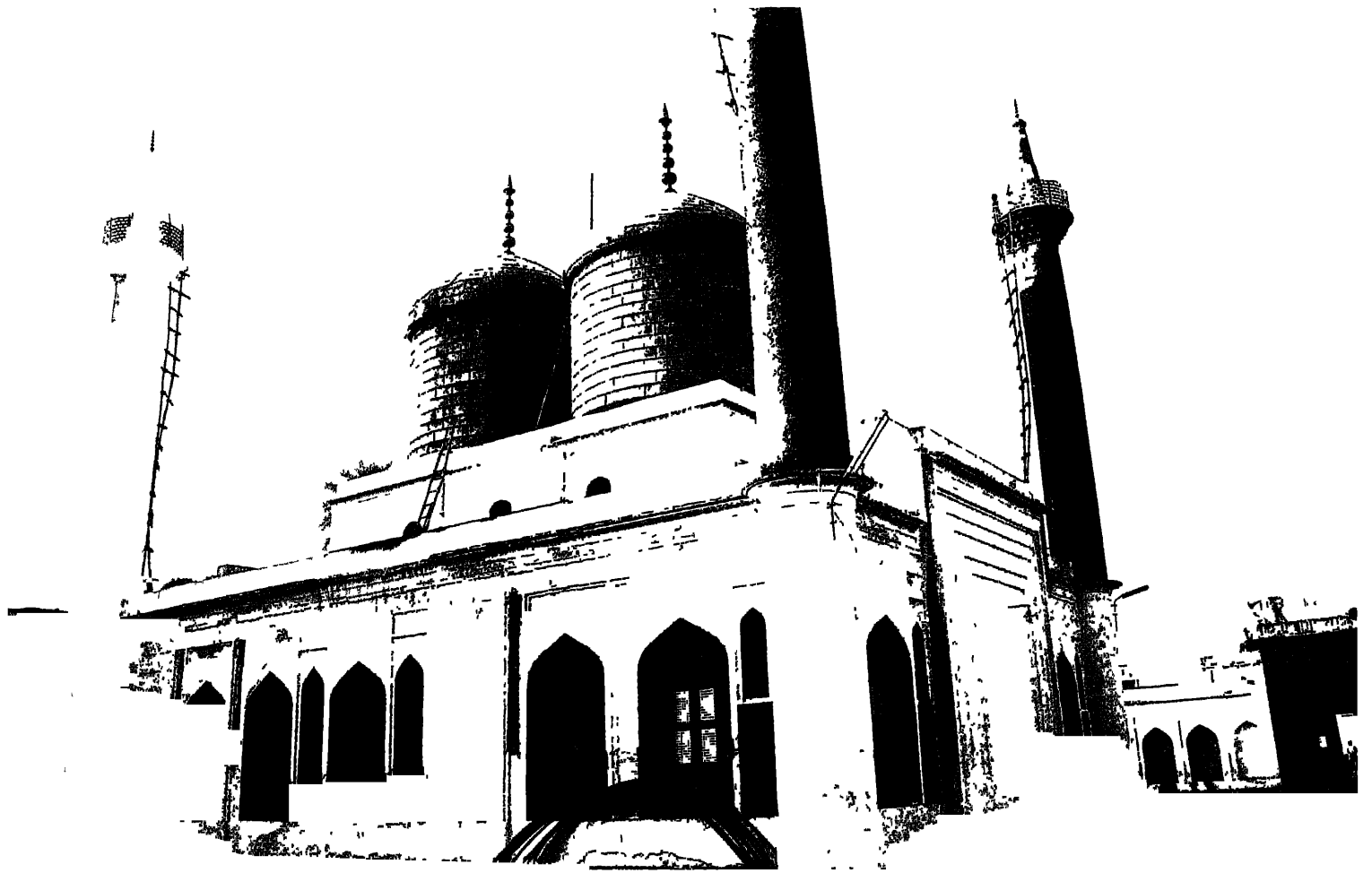
**13**  
Hussainabad Imambara  
interior. Photograph.  
Lt-Col. Anil Mehrotra.



**14**  
Stucco design at the  
Imambara Mughal Sahiba.  
Photograph: Neeta Das.



**15**  
Talkatora Karbala.  
Photograph:  
Lt-Col. Anil Mehrotra.



16  
Kazmain Karbala, with its  
Iraqi-style twin domes  
and minars Photograph:  
Lt-Col. Anil Mehrotra.

Azimullah, has a very alien character. It has a central shrine, with two courtyards at either end. The entrance court has a garden with meandering waterways, and lush green trees and feels like an oasis in a desert.

#### Imambaras and Karbalas Today

These are looked after by various trusts set up by their founders, like the Hussainabad Trust, and therefore many Shias are employed within these buildings. Silent most of the year, the imambaras awake during Chellum and Muharram, when they are cleaned and lighted, newly-prepared tazias are installed, and stages for the speakers organized with microphones and loudspeakers. Devout Shias donate food as they collect to hear, in their black mourning dresses, of the calamities faced by their leaders, and overcome by the passionate narration of the speakers, they weep again for the martyrs. Various forms of extreme mourning like fire-

walking and self-infliction of wounds by knives are practised by those in the procession that is taken out from the imambara. The spectators, mainly Shias, watch the whole show with reverence and awe. On the last day the activities shift to the karbalas and similar rituals take place. The imambaras and karbalas quieten down again after the burial of the tazias. Many tourists and pilgrims can also be seen around the year in these complexes.<sup>5</sup> They are both Lucknow's heritage and religious sites for Shias the world over.

#### NOTES

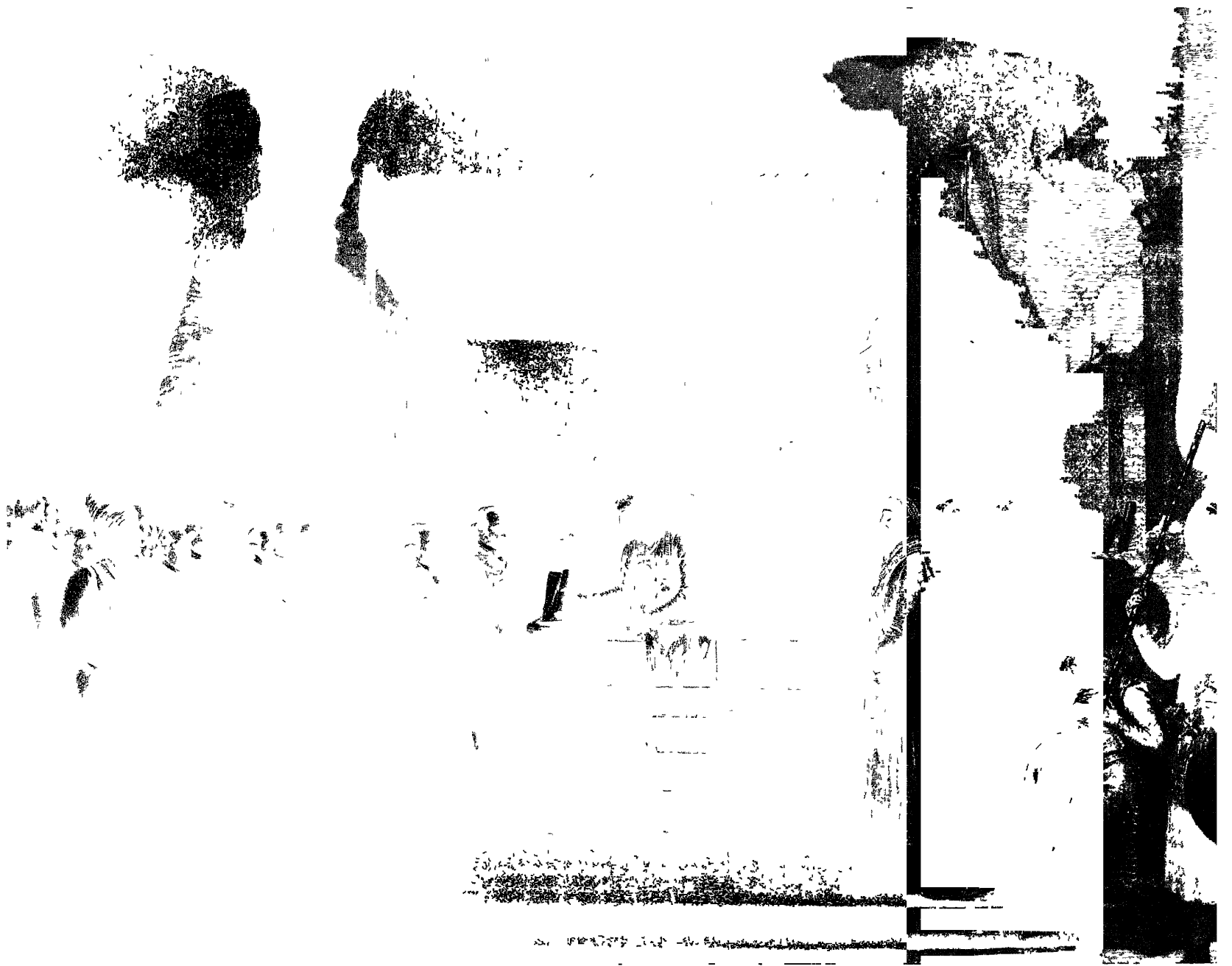
1. Neeta Das, "The demand for a new architecture", *Architecture + Design*, March-April 1998.
2. Neeta Das, *The Architecture of Imambaras*, Lucknow, Lucknow Mahotsav Patrika Samiti, 1991.
3. Das, 1991
4. Sidney Hay, *Historic Lucknow*, Lucknow, The Pioneer Press, 1939.
5. Das, 1991.







## THE VISUAL ARTS



**1**  
 Shah Alam conveying the  
 grant of the diwani of  
 Bengal to Robert Clive. By  
 Benjamin West, circa 1818  
 after an earlier version  
 circa 1795. Foster Album  
 folio 29 OIOC.  
 Reproduced by permission  
 of the British Library,  
 London.



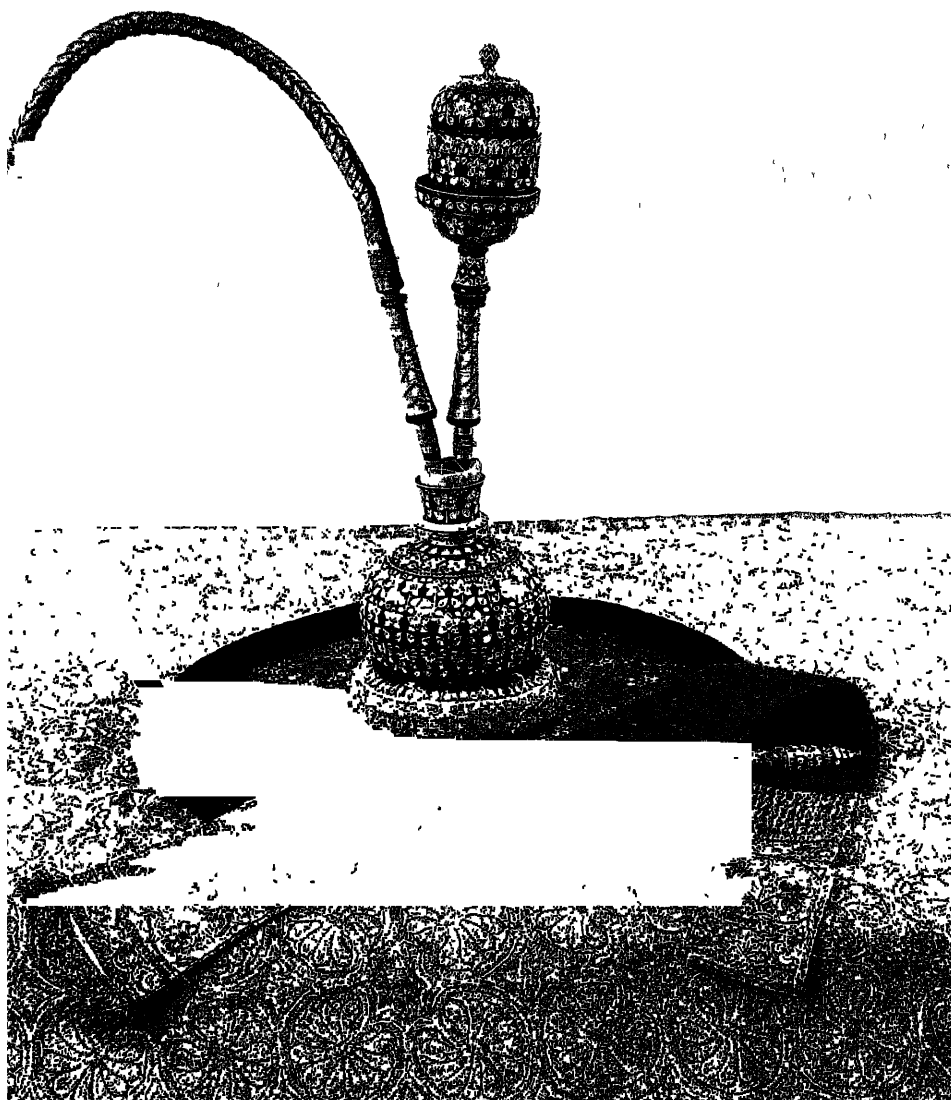
# The Exploration of Nawabi Culture by European Collectors in 18th-Century Lucknow

*Lucian Harris*

In the history of the collecting of Indian art and artefacts by Europeans, a unique importance must be accorded to the activities of the foreign residents of Lucknow and Faizabad in the second half of the 18th century. The presence of wealthy and educated European mercenaries and British East India Company servants in positions of influence at the courts of the Nawabs of Awadh Shuja-ud-daula and Asaf-ud-daula, brought two separate traditions of collecting and patronage into contact, resulting in a period of interaction and syncretism during which some of Europe's most important Indological collections were acquired.

Shuja-ud-daula had only to look to the Mughal emperors for a sophisticated model of collecting based on practices recurrent throughout and beyond the Islamic world. Libraries were central to this culture, bringing together the patronage and collecting of manuscripts, paintings, and other arts of the book. Valuable examples of applied arts like jewellery, jade, armour, and weaponry were also commonly collected, often in the form of military booty or diplomatic gifts. Furthermore, if Indian art was just beginning to interest Europeans, European art had been collected and studied by the Mughal emperors since the late 16th century, and had made an immediate impact on miniature painting, as well as on other aspects of imperial symbolism.

With the stimulation of European interest in the languages and culture of South Asia by the expansion of the Asia trade in the 18th century, came an increase in the collecting of manuscripts and other artefacts by those involved in trade, religion, or soldiering. By the 1740s significant collections of Indian manuscripts had been made by Europeans based in and around ports like Goa, Surat, Chandernagore, and Madras. The first collections containing material from Awadh were made in the late 1750s and early 1760s by British and French soldiers involved in campaigns across Bengal, Bihar, and Awadh.



2  
Silver and gilt enamelled  
hookah base, bowl, and  
cover, presented to Robert  
Clive, circa 1760. Powis  
Castle Collection. National  
Trust Photographic Library,  
UK/Erik Pelham.

Finding themselves in positions of considerable wealth and power in India, and dealing with Indian commanders, dignitaries, and even rulers, many of these officers indulged in the accepted symbols of status, both through political expediency and personal interest and taste. Robert Clive, whose manipulation of his relationships with contemporary Indian rulers did much to establish British dominion (figure 1), and who in his career must certainly have seen numerous treasuries, armouries, and libraries, made a sizeable collection of Indian artefacts (figure 2) many of which came from Awadh.<sup>1</sup> These included three muraqqas or albums of miniature paintings containing material from the library of Nawab Shuja-ud-daula.<sup>2</sup>

The defeat of Shuja-ud-daula at Baksa (Buxar) in 1764 and the treaty of Allahabad in 1765 gave Clive and his officers access to some of the nawab's treasures. General John Carnac and his Persian interpreter Captain Archibald Swinton (figure 3) both acquired large collections at this time. Carnac, whose manuscripts were used by Sir William Jones in England, may have sold Clive a large painting of Shuja-ud-daula on a lion hunt by Mir Kalan Khan, one of the best established and most skilled of the nawab's artists, who had come to Lucknow from Delhi in 1759. Swinton's large collection included 150 Persian manuscripts, as well as muraqqas with paintings from Awadh, Bihar, Bengal, and the Deccan, their diversity reflecting the variety of material available in north India at the time.<sup>3</sup>

A more sustained interest in Indian culture was taken by some of the Frenchmen who entered into service with Indian rulers in 1757 after the battle of Plassey, and when the Treaty of Paris officially ended Anglo-French hostilities in 1763. Though European mercenaries had served Indian rulers in the past, Shuja-ud-daula was one of the first to allow them significant influence in his military affairs. After the nawab had moved his capital from Lucknow to Faizabad in 1764 at least two hundred Frenchmen were reputed to be resident there.<sup>4</sup>

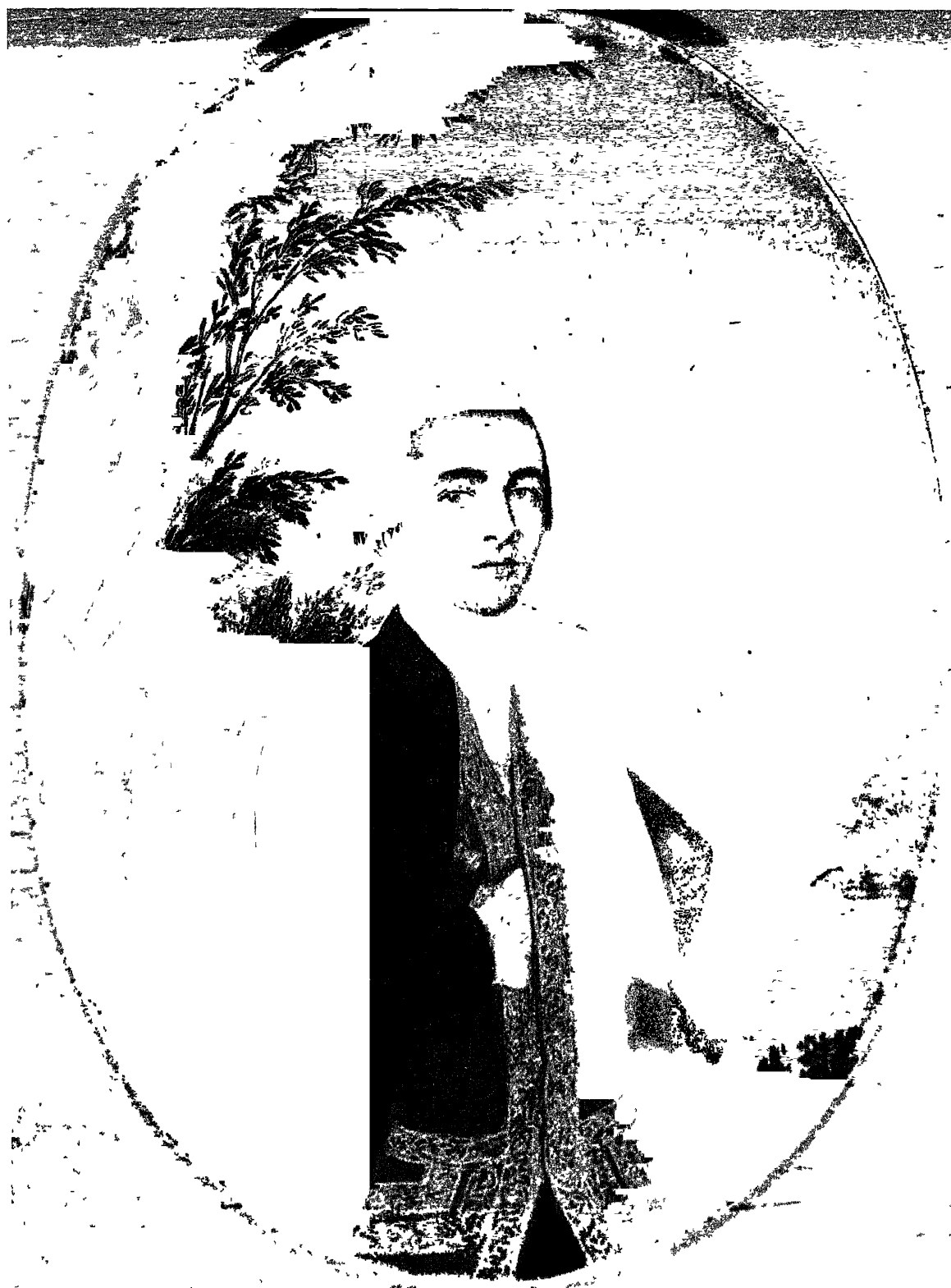
Amongst the array of freebooters attracted to the Awadh court those known to have engaged in cultural activities included Frenchman René Madec, the Neapolitan Michael Filose who was known to write Persian verse, and his son Jean-Baptiste de la Fontaine. Most notable, however, was Colonel Jean-Baptiste Gentil, who after a distinguished military career serving the French in south India since 1752, arrived at the court of Shuja-ud-daula in 1757, and remained in his service for eighteen years, moving with him to the new



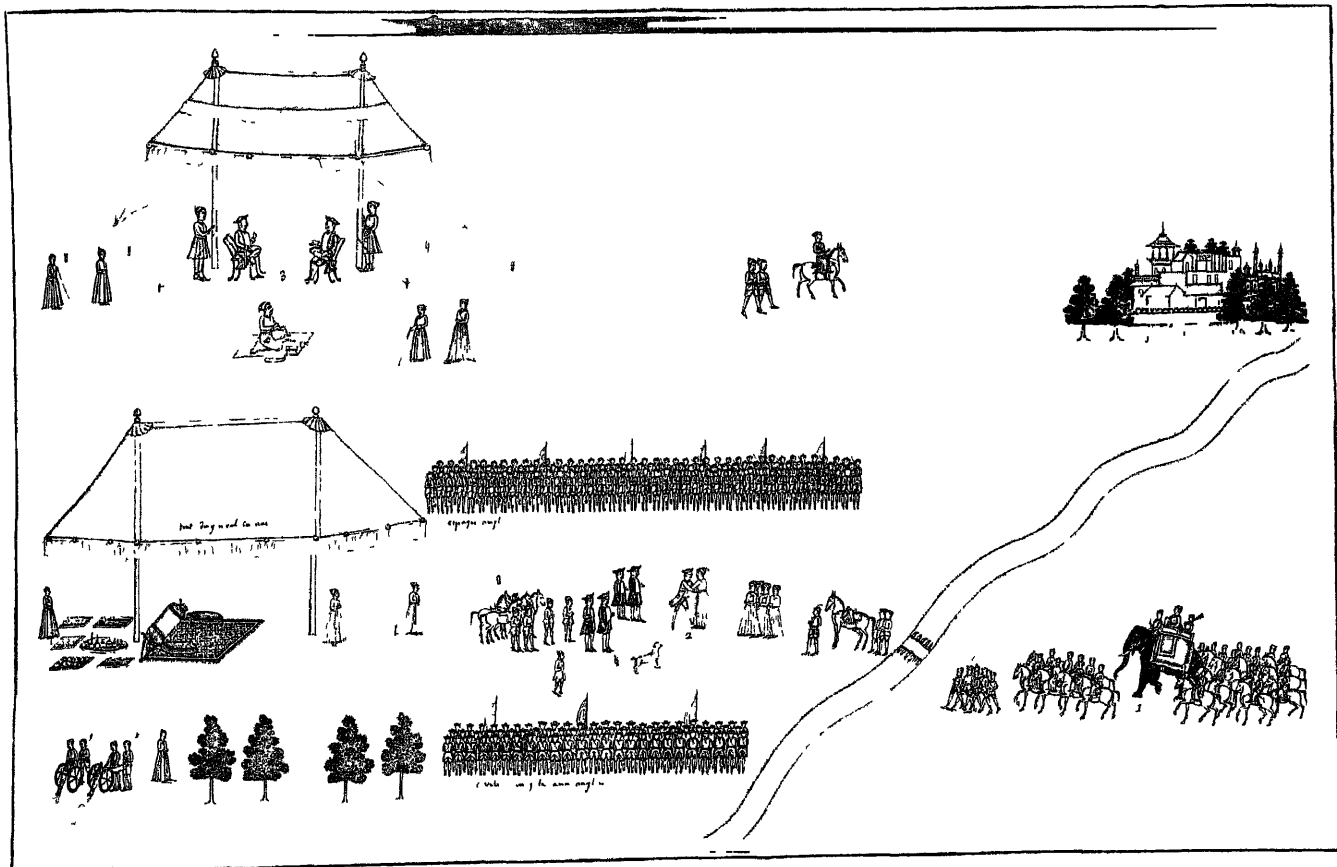
capital at Faizabad. Freed from the pressure to uphold European conventions like many of his compatriots, he began to integrate into Indian society and eventually married Thérèse Velho, a woman whose family of Portuguese descent had been in service at the Mughal court since the time of Aurangzeb in the late 17th century. Later his friend Jean-Baptiste Chevalier, Governor of

Chandernagore, wrote of Gentil that “his long standing custom of living among the Asiatics had caused him to contract their manners, so he had almost lost those of his native country”.<sup>5</sup>

It has been suggested that Gentil’s interests in Indian culture may have been stimulated by the influence of men such as Marquis Charles De Bussy, French commander in the Deccan, and the



3  
Captain Archibald Swinton.  
By an unknown artist. In a  
private Scottish collection.



explication du /au Gentil avec le général Carnac 3. From the collection of the Nawab Shuja-ud-daula, Allahabad. The arrival of the Nawab's army at the camp of the British in 1765.

4

Monsieur Gentil, General Carnac, and Nawab Shuja-ud-daula at Camp Djahresmahou, Allahabad province, with troops. From the Gentil Album V&A Picture Library, HC4588. Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

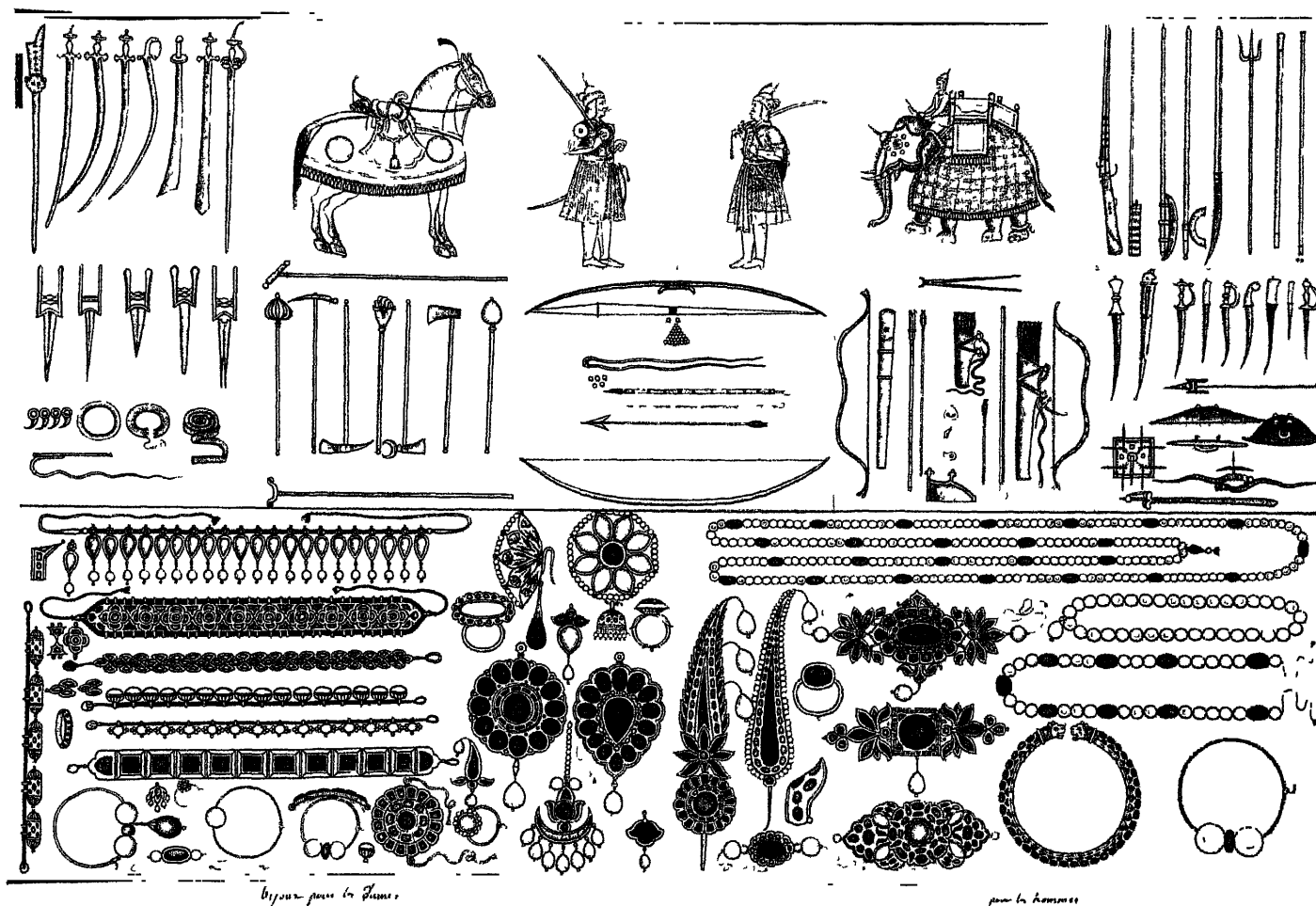
Orientalist manuscript collector Abraham Anquetil Duperron whom Gentil had guided to the rock temples at Ellora in 1758.<sup>6</sup> Certainly very few Europeans in India at this time were studying Indian culture and collecting its artefacts, and the sporadic early contacts amongst like-minded men would later develop into a small network of scholarship and collecting revolving around groups of friends in Calcutta and Lucknow.

Though resolutely anti-British in his loyalties, Gentil nevertheless knew many of his British contemporaries with similar interests in Indian culture. In 1765, as Shuja-ud-daula's aide-de-camp, he had negotiated with both Carnac and Swinton whilst the British were in occupation of the palace at Faizabad (figure 4). Having also served Mir Kasim, Nawab of Bengal, he knew civilians like William Fullarton, who collected and commissioned Indian paintings at Patna, and Warren Hastings whose own considerable collection was begun in the late 1750s. The extent of

mutual inspiration amongst these early Indological collectors may never be known, but evidence from later decades suggests that such esoteric pursuits bred considerable fraternity.

Gentil's collection was remarkable for its breadth – containing manuscripts, paintings, medals, coins, and weapons (figure 5). He had refused a British offer of 120,000 rupees for it in India and on his return to France in 1777, gave a large part of it to the Bibliothèque du Roi in Paris.<sup>7</sup> The 133 Persian and Sanskrit manuscripts established what would remain for some time the finest collection of its kind in Europe – consulted by many pioneering Orientalists, whilst Gentil's albums of Indian paintings were kept in the Cabinet des Estampes where they became an important source for early investigations into Indian religious iconography.<sup>8</sup>

One of the outstanding parts of the collection was a series of large albums, commissioned from Indian artists in



Faizabad in the 1770s, recording the history, religion, costume, customs, architecture, and geography of northern India, with many illustrations based on objects and images from his own collection. These unique volumes show Gentil deeply engaged in Indological research; but the resultant stylistically syncretic works are also indicative of an interaction between European and Indian traditions that was increasingly characteristic of the culture of the court of Awadh.

It was not until the early 1770s, over a decade after the arrival of Gentil and the French contingent, that the social milieu which generated this distinctive phenomenon of cultural interaction began truly to take shape. One reason for this was that Shuja-ud-daula had purposefully restricted East India Company influence in Awadh, and even after a treaty signed with Warren Hastings in September 1773 it was hard for any Englishman to take up residence there. Only after his death in

1775, and his son Asaf-ud-daula's move back to Lucknow, were these barriers finally removed, heralding a stream of visitors from Calcutta, European profiteers, and a permanent East India Company Residency.

In 1773 a Franco-Swiss engineer, Colonel Antoine-Louis Polier, was seconded from the East India Company in Calcutta and came to Faizabad to take employment with the nawab as Chief Surveyor. More than anyone else, Polier was instrumental in encouraging the Indological pursuits of his contemporaries, and fostered social contacts between cultivated and intellectual men in the European and Indian communities of Lucknow. The atmosphere of cultural exchange which he stimulated produced interesting instances of stylistic syncretism in art and architecture as in collections and collecting.

Though dwarfed by the grandiose accumulation of objects made by the

5  
Arms and jewellery for men and women From the Gentil Album V&A Picture Library, CT16810 IS 25 34-1980 Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.





6

Portrait of Shuja-ud-daula in Tartar dress. By Mihr Chand after a painting by Tilly Kettle, Faizabad, circa 1772. V&A Picture Library, CT17352 IS. 287-1951. Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

7 opposite

The Churning of the Ocean. By a Lucknow artist, circa 1780. From the Polier Album. BL. Or. 4769 folio 10. Reproduced by permission of the British Library, London.

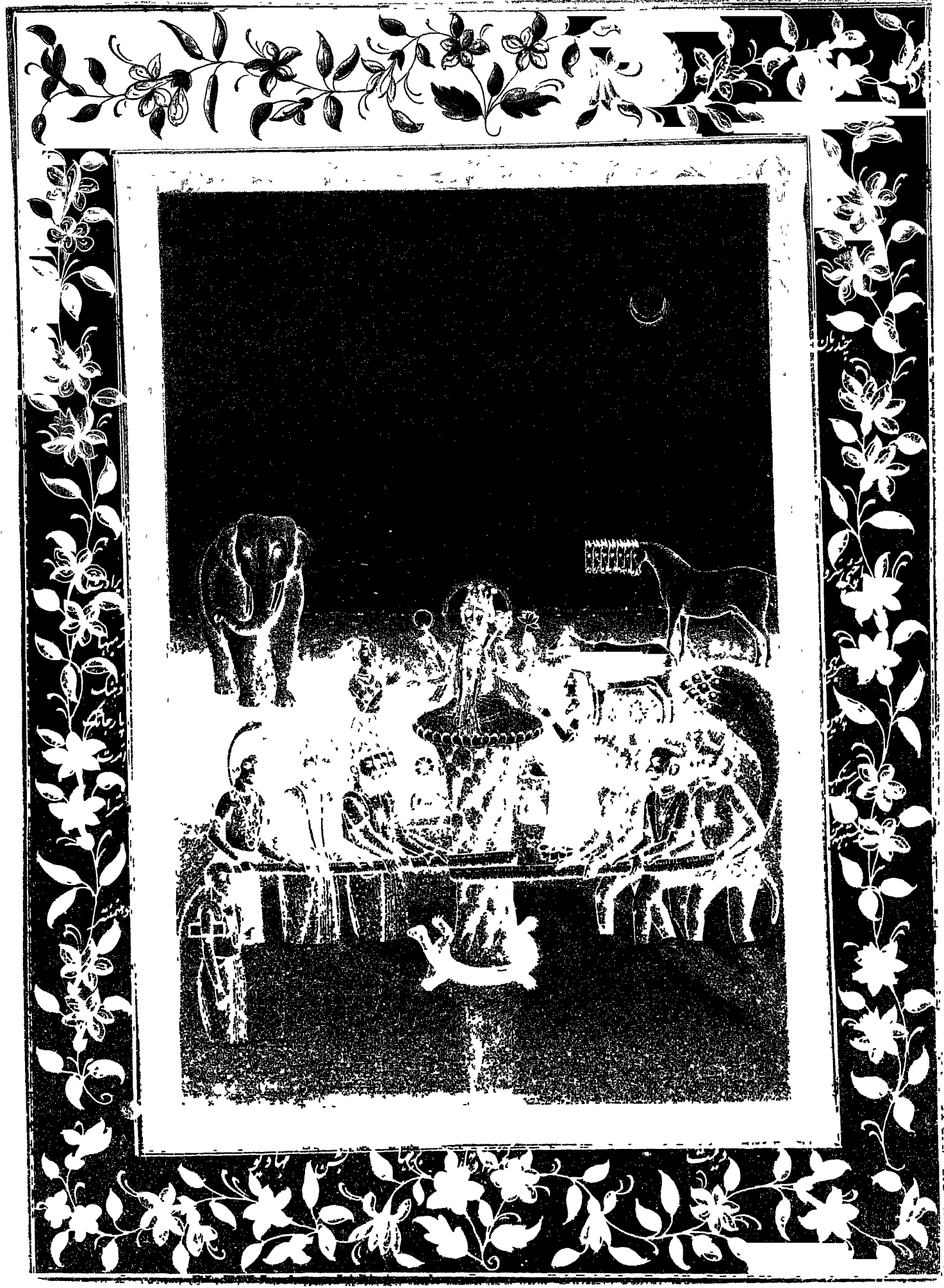
other great French denizen of Lucknow, General Claude Martin, Polier's collection represented the most sophisticated blending of European and Indian taste, style, and agenda. Not only did it contain material of relevance to many of the key interests of European Indology, but it also aspired to reflect the content and aesthetic standards of the best Indian collections like those of the Nawab Shuja-ud-daula, and the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam, of whose court and reign Polier later wrote an account.<sup>9</sup>

Living in the manner of an Indian aristocrat in Faizabad, and at Polierganj, his residence in Lucknow, Polier adopted

aspects of Indian dress and custom, and cultivated relations with the nawab and other influential courtiers, as well as entertaining some of the grandest and most cultured visitors from Calcutta. His lifestyle was captured in a portrait of him watching a nautch in his Faizabad residence, painted by the British artist Tilly Kettle. This artist arrived at Faizabad in 1772 and his work was influential on Indian painters at the nawabi court (figure 6). Extensive correspondence in French and Persian shows Polier's awareness of the political affairs, a material and intellectual culture of both Europe and Asia.<sup>10</sup> Indeed his dilettantism, commitment to the encouragement of Indological research, and appreciation of Indian art and literature was comparable only to that of Warren Hastings, whose large Indian collection was also similar in style to Polier's.

Polier's library consisted of over five hundred Persian and Arabic manuscripts, many of which he sold to Edward Pote before leaving India, and are now in Cambridge University Library, whilst others were later given to the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.<sup>11</sup> His most famous acquisition was the eleven-volume transcription of the Vedas, the first complete set to reach Europe, presented to the British Museum by Sir Joseph Banks on Polier's behalf.

Polier's interaction with Indian, and more specifically Lucknow, culture is particularly evident in his collection of Indian paintings, much of which he sold to the eccentric English collector and author of *Vathek*, William Beckford, whose manuscripts were acquired by the Royal Library in Berlin later in the 19th century. Created in a very Indian style, it was also reflective of contemporary European Indological interests. The paintings ranged from some of the best Mughal and Deccani examples to works by contemporary artists in Awadh, many commissioned by Polier himself. Some



were of an unusually large size showing scenes of the palace architecture of Delhi, Agra, and Lucknow and various courtly activities. Most were kept in the Mughal fashion, interspersed with examples of calligraphy, mounted on pages with floral borders in muraqqas with decorative bindings, and of a quality comparable to those made for the nawabs.

Although Hindu subjects were not uncommon in Indo-Muslim collections of the time, a more specific interest in Hindu iconography is apparent in Polier's collection as indeed it was in those of Gentil and many other European collectors. Whilst Polier's two volumes of Hindu deities in the British Library are typical of the material often acquired by Europeans (figure 7), a more

sophisticated and original idiom was created in Lucknow by artists like Mihr Chand, an exile from Delhi whose work for Polier and the nawabs of Awadh incorporated aspects of Mughal, Rajput, and European painting.<sup>12</sup> Many examples of the work of Mihr Chand and his studio appear in Polier's albums, including a set of ragamala paintings, illustrating musical modes, a genre which fascinated many early Indological collectors.<sup>13</sup>

Much of Polier's collection was made in the late 1770s and 1780s, and whilst, as we have seen, there were earlier precedents for his kind of cultural outlook, it was really after the accession of Asaf-ud-daula in 1775, and the movement of the capital back to Lucknow, that European collecting and the interaction between European and Indian culture became increasingly pronounced.

An important arrival in 1775 was Colonel Claude Martin, another Frenchman, albeit with close ties to the Company, who had worked in Faizabad in the early 1770s. Martin was appointed Superintendent of the nawab's arsenal, and would become one of the most remarkable and long-standing exponents of European culture in Lucknow, making his imprint on the city in many different ways.<sup>14</sup>

Like Polier he played host to many important visitors to Lucknow, and kept abreast of contemporary trends in European taste, scholarship, and science through correspondence with men like the English antiquarian collector Charles Townley, from whom he purchased classical casts and medals. As one of the richest men in Awadh, Martin collected on a grand scale with an almost Beckfordian tendency towards excess. His inventories provide a fascinating picture of the sheer size and diversity of his collection which was for the most part of European origin, and whilst it contained numerous Indian things, it was very different in character to the Indian-styled

8

Spoonbill By a Lucknow artist, circa 1780  
V&A Picture Library,  
CT9169 IS 7-1955.  
Reproduced by permission  
of the Trustees of the  
Victoria and Albert  
Museum, London





and Indological collections of Polier and others. A closer parallel could be made with the great haphazard assemblage of European objects made by the nawab, many undoubtedly supplied by Martin himself.

Amongst Martin's possessions were a variety of "Hindustanee drawings" and "fancy figures by native painters", as well as a large set of natural history paintings by Indian artists (figure 8) of a type bought or commissioned by other European collectors in the late 18th century like Lady Mary Impey, Major James Rind, and the first British Resident, Nathaniel Middleton.<sup>15</sup>

The accession of Asaf-ud-daula also brought a new East India Company presence in the city and an increase in the number of British visitors. From the outset, the Governor-General Warren Hastings established a precedent of sending to Lucknow men who spoke Persian and had the temperament and

bearing appropriate to cope in the courtly environment. Apart from a proclivity for manipulation and rascality, a frequent common denominator amongst the Residents and their assistants was an interest in Indian culture.

This was certainly the case with Nathaniel Middleton, whose collection, though smaller than Polier's, contained a similar range and quality of material representing many of the facets of nawabi taste. He owned over fifty Persian manuscripts including works from Shuja-ud-daula's library, some of Mughal origin.<sup>16</sup> Amongst these were a copy of the *Baburnama* with 150 illustrations, and a *Shahnama*, which was said by Sir William Ouseley to be "the most superb manuscript I ever saw", and was possibly the manuscript held by Middleton in a contemporary portrait by Tilly Kettle.<sup>17</sup> Also in his collection was a muraqqa with 62 miniatures and a portrait of Shuja-ud-daula for whom it may have

9  
Elephant and rider  
trampling a tiger. Attributed  
to Mir Kalan Khan,  
Faizabad, circa 1770. From  
the Richard Johnson  
Album. IOL 241 folio 3.  
Reproduced by permission  
of the British Library,  
London.



been made, and a large set of natural history paintings.

For British collectors Lucknow was a good source for manuscripts and miniature paintings, with a healthy pool of local artists whose work could be commissioned. Richard Johnson, one of the most avid British collectors and another close friend of Warren Hastings, made use of all these opportunities during his time there. Appointed in October 1780 as Assistant to the Resident John Bristow, he and Nathaniel Middleton, then Agent, formed a faction against Bristow whom Middleton replaced in May 1781. It thereafter remained a happy and culturally stimulating alliance until both men were recalled in October 1782 to refute charges levelled against them. Johnson's collection, made in Lucknow, Calcutta, and Hyderabad, included over a thousand manuscripts and five hundred Indian miniatures contained in albums, most of which were sold to the library of the East India Company in 1809. The albums of paintings reflected his wide-ranging interest in Indian life and culture (figure 9). Like other European collectors he was fascinated with ragamala paintings and owned a number of sets, some acquired and others commissioned from contemporary Indian artists (figure 10). Johnson was quick to engage with Lucknow culture, and utilized local scribes, poets, historians, and other scholars like Mir Qamar-ud-din Minnat, whose 1781 copy of the Panjabi tale *Hira and Ranjha* included a dedicatory portrait of its English patron (figure 11).<sup>18</sup>

Major Jonathan Scott, Warren Hastings' Persian interpreter, was another member of this Indological circle who acquired part of his substantial collection of Indian manuscripts and paintings in Lucknow. Interested in compiling Persian sources for Indian history, Scott also commissioned historical works from scholars introduced to him at Polier's house, and consulted Johnson's collection

for his *History of the Deccan* based mainly on translations from the Indian historian Muhammad Ferishta.

Apart from paintings and manuscripts, arms and armour and decorative objects were also commonly collected by Europeans in Lucknow, those from the nawabi treasury being

11  
Portrait of Richard Johnson. By a Lucknow artist, circa 1782 From the Diwan of poet Mir Qamar-ud-din Minnat BL. Or. 6633 folio 68r Reproduced by permission of the British Library, London.





12  
Colonel Polier and his  
Friends. By Johann  
Zoffany, Lucknow, circa  
1785–87. Victoria  
Memorial Hall, Kolkata.  
Reproduced by permission  
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Victoria Memorial,  
Kolkata.

particularly prized. One such collection was that of Johann Zoffany, the German-born painter who visited the city three times in 1784, 1785, and 1787, painting a number of portraits of Asaf-ud-daula as well as some important records of the European clique such as “Colonel Mordaunt’s Cock Match” and “Colonel Polier and his Friends”. In the latter Zoffany captured the stimulating cultural milieu cultivated by Polier, who is depicted along with Claude Martin, John Wombwell, and Zoffany at his easel (figure 12). All four men were avid collectors, and in addition to the European paintings on the wall behind him Polier has an Indian muraqqa on the table beside him.

Zoffany’s collection seems most of all to reflect the influence of his friend Martin, head of the nawabi armoury and

a skilled weapons-maker. It included three full suits of Indian armour as well as scimitars, swords, inlaid daggers, maces, bows, matchlock pistols, and “a curious Asiatic instrument for decapitation”.<sup>19</sup> Artefacts supposedly connected to Shuja-ud-daula would eventually appear in a number of the newly-fashionable arms and armour collections in Britain as the taste for military trophies from India grew.

The decline of this particular phase of cultural interaction which inspired so many important European collections of Indian art began when Warren Hastings returned to England in 1784, for it had been his policy of nurturing the Indological pursuits of his friends and rewarding their support with lucrative posts at Lucknow that had most inspired British cultural activities there. In 1788





Polier left, and although Claude Martin remained until his death in 1800, Lucknow would never offer European residents and visitors the opportunities for collecting and patronage that had been possible in the 1770s and 1780s although the great Mughal *Padshahnama* was offered from the nawabi library to Governor-General Sir John Shore in 1797, who subsequently accepted it on behalf of King George III. In the first decades of the 19th century it would be a culturally revived Delhi that would host the last community of Europeans interested in the patronage and exploration and collecting of Indian culture.

#### NOTES

1. See R. Skelton, "Drawings and Books", in M. Archer, C. Rowell, R. Skelton, eds. *Treasures from India The Chive Collection at Powis Castle*, London, 1987, p. 123.
2. V&A, IS.48-1956, IS.133-1964; and Christie's, London, December 18, 1968, lots 66-74. Muraqqas or "books of pictures" were albums in which miniature paintings and examples of calligraphy were mounted without accompanying text. They were favoured by the Mughal emperor Jahangir and later became popular in Lucknow. See S.C. Welch, *The Emperor's Album Images of Mughal India*, New York, 1987, pp. 23-24.
3. L. Harris, "Archibald Swinton: A new source for albums of Indian miniatures in the collection of William Beckford", *Burlington Magazine*, June 2001, pp. 360-66, Christie's, London, *A catalogue of a very valuable collection of Persian, and a few Arabic MSS selected many years ago in the East by Archibald Swinton Esq*, June 6, 1810.
4. Muhammad Faiz Bakhsh, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, tr. W. Hoey, Allahabad, 1889.
5. S. Gole, *Maps of Mughal India*, New Delhi, 1988, p. 3.
6. J.-M. Lafont, *Indo-French Relations History and Perspectives*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 11.
7. Gole, p. 4.
8. F. Richard, "Jean-Baptiste Gentil, collectionneur des manuscrits persans", *Dix-huitième siècle*, xxviii, 1996, pp. 91-110.
9. P.C. Gupta, ed., *Shah Alam II and his court, a narrative of the transactions at the court of Delhi*, by Antoine Louis Polier, Calcutta, 1947, based on manuscript works by Polier between 1776 and 1779.
10. G. Colas and F. Richard, "Le fonds Polier a la Bibliothèque Nationale", *Bulletin de L'École Française D'Extrême-Orient*, Tome LXIII, Paris, 1984, pp. 98-123.
11. E.H. Palmer, "Catalogue of the Oriental Manuscripts in the Library of King's College Cambridge", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, June 1867. Also D.S. Margoliouth, *Catalogue of the Oriental Manuscripts in the Library of Eton College*, Oxford, 1904.
12. The volumes of Hindu divinities are BL. Or. 4769-70. See J. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India*, London, 1982, p. 150, No. 131.
13. See E. and R.L. Waldschmidt, *Miniatures of Musical Inspiration in the Collection of the Berlin Museum of Indian Art*, vol. 2, Berlin, 1975.
14. For Martin's full career see R. Llewellyn-Jones, *A Very Ingenious Man Claude Martin in Early Colonial India*, Delhi, 1992.
15. See M. Archer, *Natural History Drawings in the India Office Library*, London, 1962; and Eyre & Hobhouse, *A Cabinet of Natural History Curiosities Drawings of Flora and Fauna 1630-1830*, ex cat., London, 1983.
16. Mr Christie, London, *A catalogue of the very valuable collection of rare and curious Persian and other MSS of the late Nathaniel Middleton*, February 19, 1808.
17. M. Archer, *India and British Portraiture, 1770-1825*, London, 1979, p. 41.
18. T. Falk and M. Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*, London, 1981, p. 18, BL. Or. 6633, fol. 68r.
19. Messrs. Robins, London, *A most curious and unique assemblage of the valuable property of Johan Zoffany, Esq Decd*, May 9, 1811.



# Painting at Lucknow 1775–1850

*J.P. Losty*

The Late Mughal style at Awadh has been the subject of considerable scholarly interest. Artists such as Mir Kalan Khan and Mihr Chand are recognized as great masters, and their work is now eagerly sought after, as was the case in the later 18th century. I have dealt with some aspects of portraiture in this early Awadh school in an earlier volume of *Marg*, and this article is now devoted to a consideration of the later school, after 1775. But before doing so, it would be as well to remind ourselves of what an absolutely classic Awadh painting should look like, i.e. a natural development from the Late Mughal style under Muhammad Shah but without any obvious extraneous European influence.

Figure 1 is a very grand work which has only recently come to light in an English country auction, exemplifying to perfection the Awadhi style with its tightly organized construction, the long flowing lines of its figural painting, and its brilliant palette of contrasting vibrant and cool colours. On a terrace covered by a carpet beside a river a party is taking place, dancers and musicians are entertaining a group of princes of different ages and their attendants. Across the river is the Lalbagh at Faizabad, while the passing troop of Bengal Army sepoy indicates a date after 1765. The painting is dominated by two imposing trees, arching over the scene and framing both the festivities below and the buildings across the river. Although more conservative than artists such as Mir Kalan Khan and Mihr Chand, this unknown artist is not immune to new thinking: his animated musicians, and the gusto of the singer in their midst, reveal a new concern with the depiction of activity within a painting.

1  
An al fresco entertainment for princes. By an Awadhi artist in Faizabad, circa 1768. 59 x 44 cm. British Museum, London, 2000-12-8.01. Photograph courtesy of Indar Pasricha Ltd., London.



Kunst, Berlin. Gentil worked for the nawab 1763–75, and his collection contains Mughal miniatures and some contemporary ones from Faizabad. He also commissioned a number of albums and atlases which are illustrated by artists such as Nevasi Lal and Mohan Singh, who worked for him in a style more akin to *nimqalam* (tinted drawings) than to traditional Mughal painting. The line remains fine and detailed, but the colouring is very subdued, applied in colour washes rather than in burnished layers, with gold highlights, and the background is often left blank. This is the style used for Gentil's atlas illustrating the divisions (*subahs*) of the Mughal empire, in the British Library, compiled 1770, for his manuscripts on the history of India and his various atlases in Paris, compiled 1772–74, and for his album of paintings illustrating customs and dress of the people of Hindustan in the Victoria and Albert Museum, compiled 1774. The map from his 1770 atlas of the *subah* of Awadh seems most appropriate to illustrate here (figure 2).

Richard Johnson was in Lucknow 1780–82 as Assistant Resident for the East India Company, and half of his collection of paintings was put together in that city, from purchases of earlier miniatures and of contemporary Lucknow work, as well as of his own commissions. His interests were not so much aesthetic but more concerned with collecting paintings illustrating the history and culture of India, including a large number of portraits. It is all the more striking therefore that his collection does not contain a single portrait of the ruling Nawab Asaf-ud-daula or of his father, suggesting that good miniatures of them by court artists were simply not available. His rival collector Antoine-Louis Polier seems to have cornered the market in portraits of Shuja-ud-daula.



Polier was deputed to the nawab's court in 1773 by Warren Hastings in the capacity of an engineer, and he stayed with the nawab until 1775 when the machinations of Hastings' rivals on the Council in Calcutta forced him out of Awadh. He commissioned Mihr Chand to produce seven or eight portraits of Shuja-ud-daula, all of them painted in a manner akin to the portraits taken by Tilly Kettle in 1772. Polier was by far the most aesthetically aware of these three collectors, and his collection consists largely of miniatures of very high quality from the 17th- and 18th-century Mughal and Deccani schools and also of contemporary Awadhi painting. Much new light has been shed on Polier's collection through the recent publication

3  
Head and shoulders  
portrait miniature of  
Nawab Asaf-ud-daula. By  
Mihr Chand, circa 1775.  
Oval 4 x 3.5 cm, in a  
painted frame 16.5 x 13.5  
cm British Library,  
London, Add.Or.4390. By  
permission of the British  
Library.



4  
Nawab Asaf-ud-daula  
seated on a sofa testing a  
sword. By a Lucknow  
artist, circa 1790. 23.5 x 16  
cm. British Library,  
London, Add.Or.4026. By  
permission of the British  
Library.

of his Persian letters written in 1773–79, including letters to Mihr Chand after Polier had been obliged to quit Awadh, in which he treats the artist as part of his household.

There is also, however, no portrait in Polier's collection in Berlin of the new Nawab Asaf-ud-daula, other than Mihr Chand's portrait of him as a prince with his father and nine of his brothers, allowing us to infer a certain lack of direct patronage of artists by the nawab. Although Mihr Chand seems to have been alive up until 1780, he may then have died, just as Polier returned to Lucknow where he remained until 1788, for it is difficult otherwise to explain the absence from Polier's collection of any portraits of this nawab by Mihr Chand.

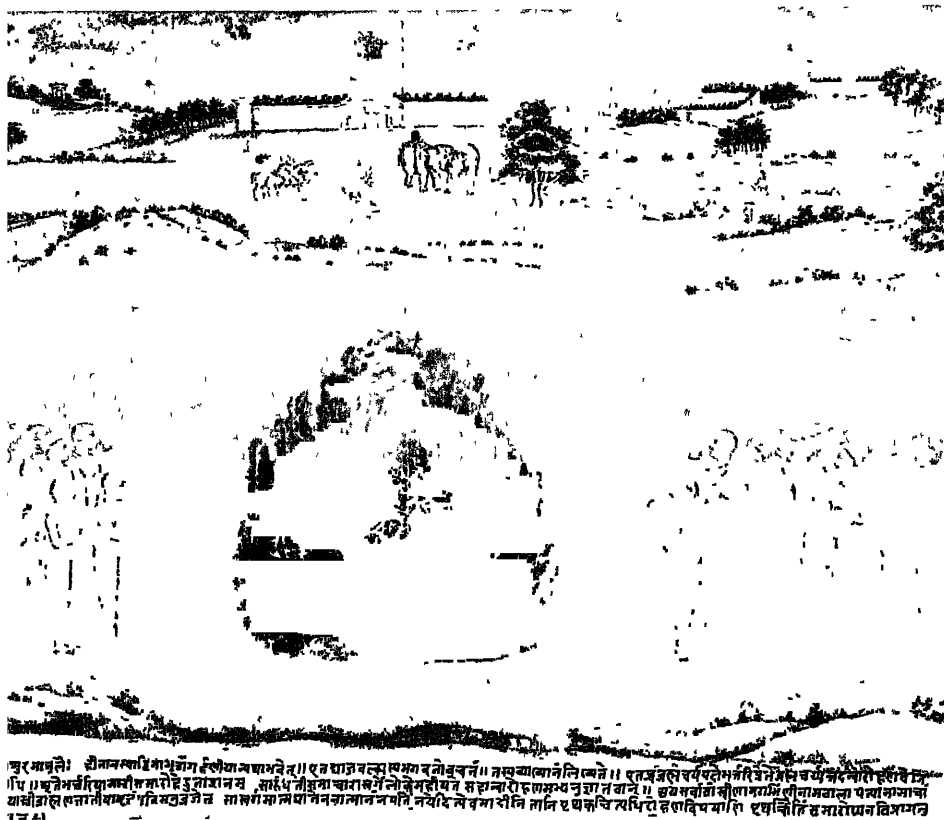
Mihr Chand did, however, paint and sign Asaf-ud-daula's portrait for another patron (figure 3). Here he follows the iconography of Kettle's 1772 painting, even down to the small and tight moustache. It must date from before the nawab allowed his moustaches to become more luxuriant, although an identifying inscription (Nawab Bahadur Asaf-ud-daula) was added after his accession in 1775. Here in imitation of a European miniaturist technique, the miniature has padding under the painted surface of the portrait to produce the same effect as seeing a European miniature under a slightly convex glass.

All but a few of the late 18th-century Lucknow portraits of the nawab follow the iconography of the Kettle or Zoffany portraits which hung in the palace at Lucknow. Asaf-ud-daula of course appears only in a subsidiary role in Kettle's work, being dominated by the overbearing figure of his tall father, but he does appear in a more regal pose in a painting done for Nathaniel Middleton by Kettle after he returned to London, now in a private collection. This must have been based on drawings taken in Lucknow. The nawab is seated in a high-backed chair, and holds a sword, while facing him is the seated figure of Nathaniel Middleton. The nawab's pose is duplicated in a well-known image by a Lucknow artist circa 1780 in the India Office collections, reproduced by Archer, indicating that copies of Kettle's preparatory drawings were still circulating in Lucknow. Another portrait of the nawab (figure 4) showing him seated on a sofa and testing the sharpness of a sword is also probably based on a preparatory drawing by a European artist. Here however the style points to Johann Zoffany. The soft handling of the nawab's face and torso is similar to that in Zoffany's well-known three-quarter length portrait done in 1784, now in the India Office collections. Our Lucknow artist here has felt obliged to include the



5  
Todi Ragini from one of  
Richard Johnson's  
commissioned ragamalas,  
1780–82 By Ghulam Reza.  
Brush drawing with ink  
and watercolour, 22.6 x  
13.7 cm. British Library,  
London, Johnson Album  
42, no. 8 By permission of  
the British Library





6  
The rite of sati By  
Bahadur Singh, Lucknow,  
1780-90. Brush drawing  
with ink and watercolour,  
34.5 x 44 cm. British  
Library, London,  
Add.Or.24. By permission  
of the British Library.

nawab's whole body, less successfully perhaps as far as the legs are concerned, but compensates with an extravagant palette of yellow, green, and purple set against a blue ground.

With the increased presence of Europeans in Lucknow and an official British presence also, Lucknow artists had a wider range of patrons. Some of these chose to interfere directly in the technical processes of painting, a development begun by Gentil who had had artists paint in a subdued watercolour style for some of his direct commissions. Richard Johnson's commissions make some use of this style initiated by Gentil, but he or his artists tend to favour a style more akin to a traditional *nimqalam*. However, although the traditional miniature techniques are modified in these commissions, there is no essential change in compositional methods, i.e. there is no readily discernible greater European influence than was already apparent in Awadh painting before 1772. For those who were interested not so much in aesthetic quality but in the subject matter of their collection, as Gentil and Johnson were,

these techniques meant that such drawings could be produced far more quickly than could the traditional paintings with their layering and burnishing of pigments.

Johnson was especially interested in Indian music and had a fine collection of manuscripts of important texts, while he also commissioned various *ragamala* series to illustrate the different systems mentioned in his manuscripts. He collected the work of contemporary Lucknow artists, and his collection is rich in the work of a whole variety of different named artists. Works by Mir Kalan Khan and Mihr Chand form of course the highlights of his collection, but he also collected work by other contemporary artists including Bahadur Singh, Hunhar, Utam Chand, and Muhammad Afzal. For his own commissions, he regularly employed a small group of artists, four of whom, Gobind Singh, Mohan Singh, Udwat Singh, and Ghulam Reza, appear to have worked together in a small studio. Ghulam Reza is certainly the strongest artist in a *ragamala* series illustrated by these four, and he, perhaps as head of this studio, drew fourteen of the subjects including all six of the ragas (figure 5). Another of Johnson's important commissions is a series of drawings by Sital Das illustrating Vedic sacrifices in this same *nimqalam* style, a type of commission for which there was no existing precedent, and illustrating admirably the spirit of intellectual enquiry in which such patrons put their collections together. A stronger artist altogether, Bahadur Singh, who could radically change his style to suit his various patrons, also worked in this same style independently. His *nimqalam* drawing of the rite of sati (figure 6) is not, however, a Johnson commission, suggesting instead that such paintings could also appeal to other contemporary collectors.

Polier interfered with artistic technique to a much lesser extent,

preferring to collect and commission in the traditional manner, in the manner, that is, of an Indian nobleman: he writes of himself "on establishing myself there [Faizabad], I took on the customs and usages of the Indians with whom I lived". Polier commissioned two portraits of himself enjoying the domestic felicity of a "nabob". One of them is the well known painting signed by Mihr Chand, now in Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan's collection, showing Polier smoking a hookah and watching a nautch. This probably dates from Polier's first period of duty in Awadh 1773–75. The other

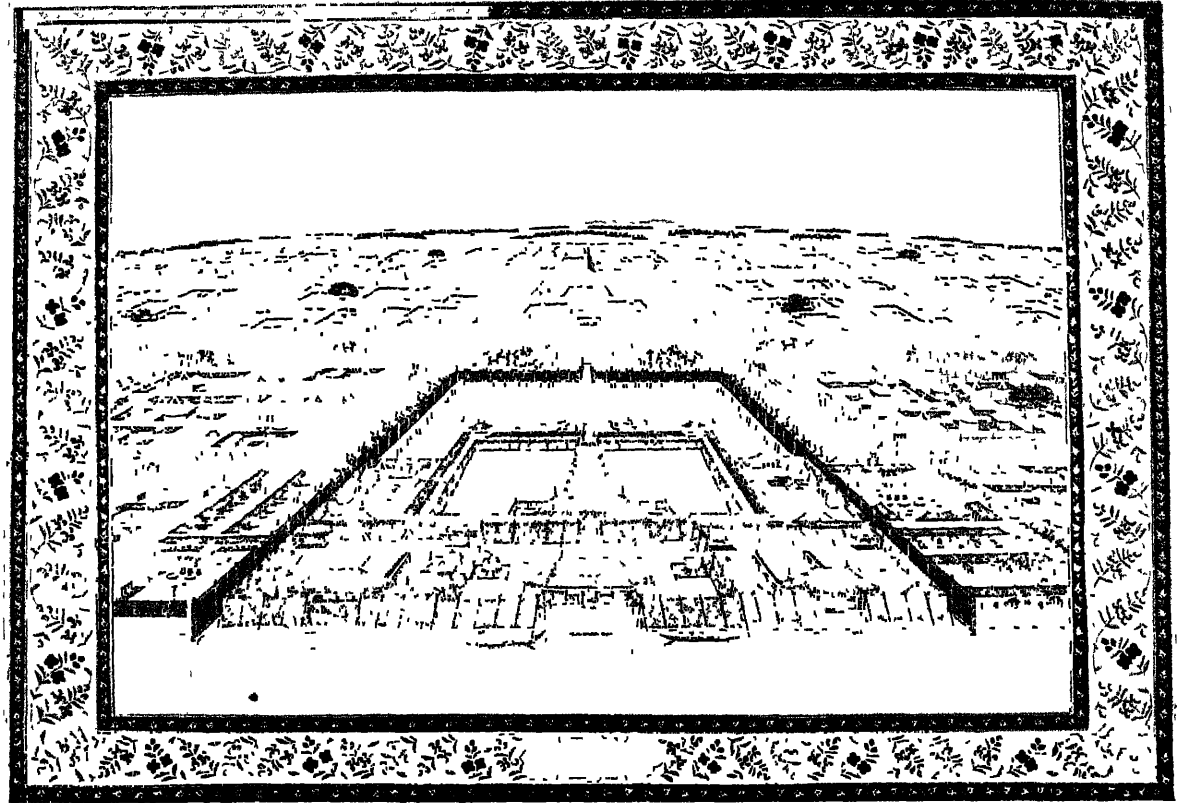
(figure 7) shows Polier seated on cushions in the veranda of what must have been his house in Lucknow, watching dancing girls and musicians. This painting is clearly based very closely on a European original. Now that we can follow Polier's precise movements, the painting must be dated to the mid-1780s, as it must be based on an original painting by Zoffany. Kettle was back in Calcutta in early 1773, while Polier did not reach Faizabad until the rainy season of that same year. The painting is in fact far more complicated in its subtle compositional layers than

7  
Antoine-Louis Polier  
enjoying a nautch at his  
house in Lucknow. By a  
Lucknow artist, circa 1785,  
after a lost painting by  
Johann Zoffany. 29 x 30.5  
cm. Private collection,  
photograph courtesy  
British Library.



8

A royal encampment scene, by a Lucknow artist, 1780-85 54 x 76 cm. British Museum, London, 1974 6-17 05(1). Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum



anything Kettle had attempted in India, and resembles strongly the painting of the Impey family listening to music, which Zoffany had painted in Calcutta in 1783 just before his departure for Lucknow.

Other parts of Polier's collection had been given away before he left India in 1788. An album of very large drawings now in the Achenbach Foundation in San Francisco had been given to Lady Coote, while three spectacular drawings were given to the artist Ozias Humphry

on May 11, 1786 during the latter's stay in Lucknow. Figure 8 shows what appears to be an imperial encampment on the bank of a river. The eye is led (for once with impeccable linear perspective) back through a series of enclosures, from the tented Diwan-i-Khas or privy council chamber, through to the Diwan-i-Am (public audience hall) and the arrival enclosures, through the entrance to a distant landscape of gentle hills. Reflections in the water allow us to see the underside of tent canopies. A zenana is to the left, while the monarch's private quarters are to the right, with horse lines and cooking enclosures on either side. The technique of landscape is akin to watercolour, with lemony green fields and violet hills.

Watercolour washes and similar techniques were therefore finding their way into the mainstream of painting in Lucknow. A further technical development is the use of gouache or bodycolour rather than pure watercolour for most Lucknow paintings from this time on. English watercolour technique in the late 18th century had only just developed to the point where it was

9

Street scene in Lucknow. By a Lucknow artist, 1790-1800. 32 x 44 cm. British Library, London, Add.Or. 1964. By permission of the British Library.



permissible to lay in tones of local colour over the initial washes of grey or sepia, and for anything more colourful, gouache was the preferred medium, so that it was this technique with its bright and heavy colours which appealed to Lucknow and other Indian artists to enable them to produce the colourful effects of traditional miniatures but without the labour.

Such large perspective views as figure 8 must have given Lucknow artists a sense of their command of space, for the next decade produced some very effective paintings in which a concern for the rendering of space is obvious. Lucknow painting in the traditional manner of course carried on till the end of the century. But Asaf-ud-daula not being very interested in painting, artists were



10  
An artist at work. By a Lucknow artist, 1815–20. 24 x 19.5 cm. British Library, London, Add.Or. 347 By permission of the British Library.

thus free to develop as they wished. Artists in Lucknow, like their predecessors in the Mughal studio, first copied European works, and then were able to expand their pictorial vocabulary to incorporate into their work more naturalistic renditions of space and volume. There is no particular source to be pointed to, other than a general exposure to European prints and paintings, the latter either in the nawab's collection or in those of such permanent residents as Claude Martin. The European artists who visited Awadh in the 1770s and 1780s left drawings and studies behind them, and Lucknow artists must have worked with them. The artist of the street scene (figure 9), for example, has made use of European studies to depict the volumes of the figures and the cow in the lower right corner, and very cleverly conveys a sense of depth within the painting. The man in

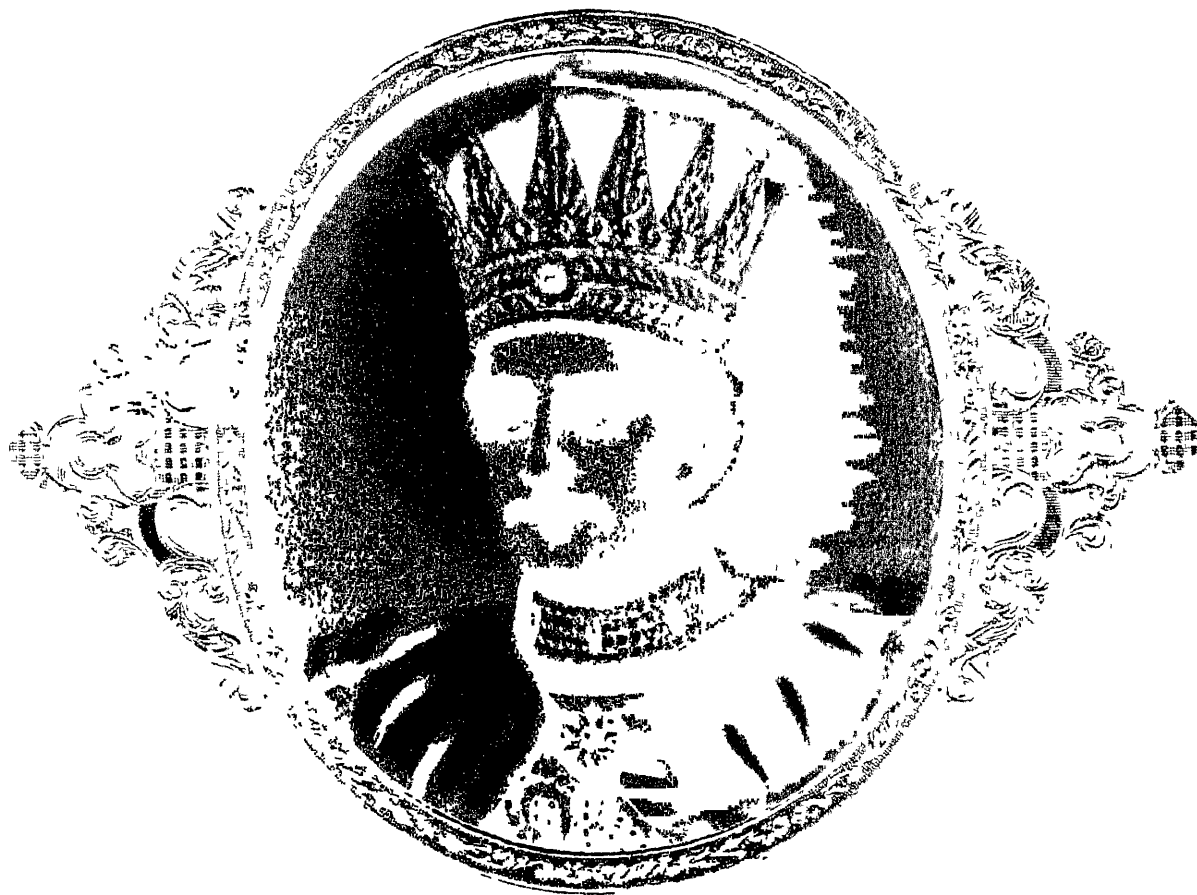
the foreground, cut off at the knee, is right up against the picture plane, while the end-on view of the cow serves to distance the nearby group of figures behind the picture plane. The two cavaliers led by their harkaras (messenger runners), though static in the Mughal manner, still process along a street which recedes satisfyingly into the distance. There is now, however, some sense of movement to the whole composition, imparted by the fluttering of the draperies and the urgently walking figure in the foreground.

This concern with space is one that continues to distinguish certain types of Lucknow painting during the 19th century. This was the period when many of the so-called "Company" schools lost much of their individualism and became concerned with the production of albums of trades and castes for a fairly lucrative "souvenir of India" market. In Lucknow,

11

Nawab Ghazi-ud-din Haider entertaining Lord and Lady Hastings at a banquet. By a Lucknow artist, circa 1825. 34.5 x 47.5 cm. British Library, London, Add.Or.1815. By permission of the British Library.





however, even in such albums we find great attention is paid to the settings in which people go about their work. A fine picture shows an artist working at a table through a window (figure 10), thereby doubly distancing the subject from the picture plane, a conceit of which Mihr Chand with his window portraits would have been proud. We may note incidentally the relatively high social status of the artist from his dress, and also that he is using a box of English watercolour paints. Even in the more ordinary sets from Lucknow this concern with spatial and figural naturalism is apparent, and such work continued to be of a high standard.

There is, however, in the course of the 19th century an increasing disparity between work produced for the court, and that produced for more ordinary patrons. The successive Nawabs Saadat Ali Khan (1798–1814) and his son Ghazi-ud-din Haider (1814–27) were both

completely open to the increasing waves of British influence and taste which swept Lucknow. In 1814 the British artist Robert Home was invited to become the official court painter in Lucknow, and he remained there from 1814 to 1827 during the whole of Ghazi-ud-din Haider's reign. Some of Home's now lost paintings from Lucknow have survived in Lucknow artists' versions of them. Some of them are straightforward copies, some represent an attempt at painting in a similar style. The result of the latter is a somewhat uneasy amalgam of British and Indian taste, as may be seen in a rather damaged painting of Nawab Ghazi-ud-din Haider entertaining Lord and Lady Hastings at a banquet during a visit to Lucknow (figure 11). We know of a state visit in 1814, during the Governor-General's tour to Delhi and back, but the fact that Ghazi-ud-din Haider is wearing a crown according with the kingly status awarded him in

**12**  
Nawab Ghazi-ud-din Haider. Watercolour on ivory by a Lucknow artist, circa 1825. Oval format, 7 x 6 cm. Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, MSS.882, f. 7a (detail). Photograph courtesy of Nasser D. Khalili.

13

Hindu priest garlanding the standards of the 35th Bengal Light Infantry during an ayudha puja. By a Lucknow artist, circa 1847. 39 x 47.5 cm. British Library, London, Add.Or. 741. By permission of the British Library.



1819, suggests that the painting is after that event, when Lord Hastings did not visit Lucknow in person. The painting is perhaps an imaginary recreation of what should have taken place in 1819, based on Robert Home's painting of one of the state banquets during Hastings's visit in 1814. It probably dates from about 1825, since the other seated Englishman appears to be Mordaunt Ricketts, Resident at the Lucknow court from 1822 to 1829, who is wearing a portrait miniature of the king around his neck.

Typical of Lucknow still in this painting is the concern with individual portraiture, found in the 1790s in the street scenes, and here carried on in the same melancholy and dignified manner. The motley crew of European hangers-on at the court is carefully depicted. This is a painting that repays careful study, for it has some very good things in it, but coarsened by the lack of care in depicting the background. The painting of the streets of Lucknow (see figure 9) showed

an artist at ease with new ideas of perspective and volume, a naturalism easily absorbed into an Indian artist's traditional concerns. Individual portraits or studies of occupations from this period reveal the same easy naturalism. Ghazi-ud-din Haider's banquet on the other hand shows an artist ill at ease, even with the possible prop of an oil painting by Robert Home to copy. Though the portraits are individually fine studies, they are put together without consideration for the space which they should fill or how they fit into the whole of the picture, while the background is reduced to a flat backcloth. In this of course such paintings are similar to the darbar scenes produced for Shah Jahan in the 17th century, which are likewise amalgams of pre-existing portrait studies placed with more of a regard for patterning than for the occupancy of physical space.

Robert Home's position as court artist ensured that his influence on Lucknow painters was inescapable.



Home not only painted numerous portraits of the monarch and of his court, mostly now lost, but was busily engaged in designing crowns, regalia, and all the other trappings of royalty required by the new status of his master. Following his retirement after the death of Ghazi-ud-din Haider in 1827, several British artists tried their hand at becoming court painter, but it is clear from two portraits in oils of Ghazi-ud-din Haider and his successor Nasir-ud-din Haider, the former signed by Muhammad Azam, Painter (musawwir), that Lucknow artists could both imitate Home's style and indeed improve on its tastelessness for this court. Successive royal portraits in oils, mostly now lost but known from later copies, continue a static and largely lifeless tradition.

Lucknow, unfortunately, unlike Delhi and Calcutta lacked artists of genius after 1800 who could have learnt to cope with and respond to this influence. Court artists, however, produced more satisfying results when the tradition concerned was closer to their own. Miniature portraits on ivory were a favourite medium in the 1820s, such as a portrait of Ghazi-ud-din Haider in the Mordaunt Ricketts collection of ivories (figure 12). These portrait miniatures of the monarch were created both by Home and by court artists as decorations intended to be worn by their recipients at the darbar as can be seen in a miniature portrait by Home of Sir Edward Paget, Commander-in-Chief, painted in 1823, and now in the National Portrait Gallery, London. Ricketts' collection also contains other portraits on ivory of the 1820s which are under more generalized European influence, in which pictures of dancing girls become more and more common.

A watercolour of a ceremony involving the colours of the 35th Bengal Light Infantry (figure 13) shows a considerable change of style, and is very cleverly painted almost in the

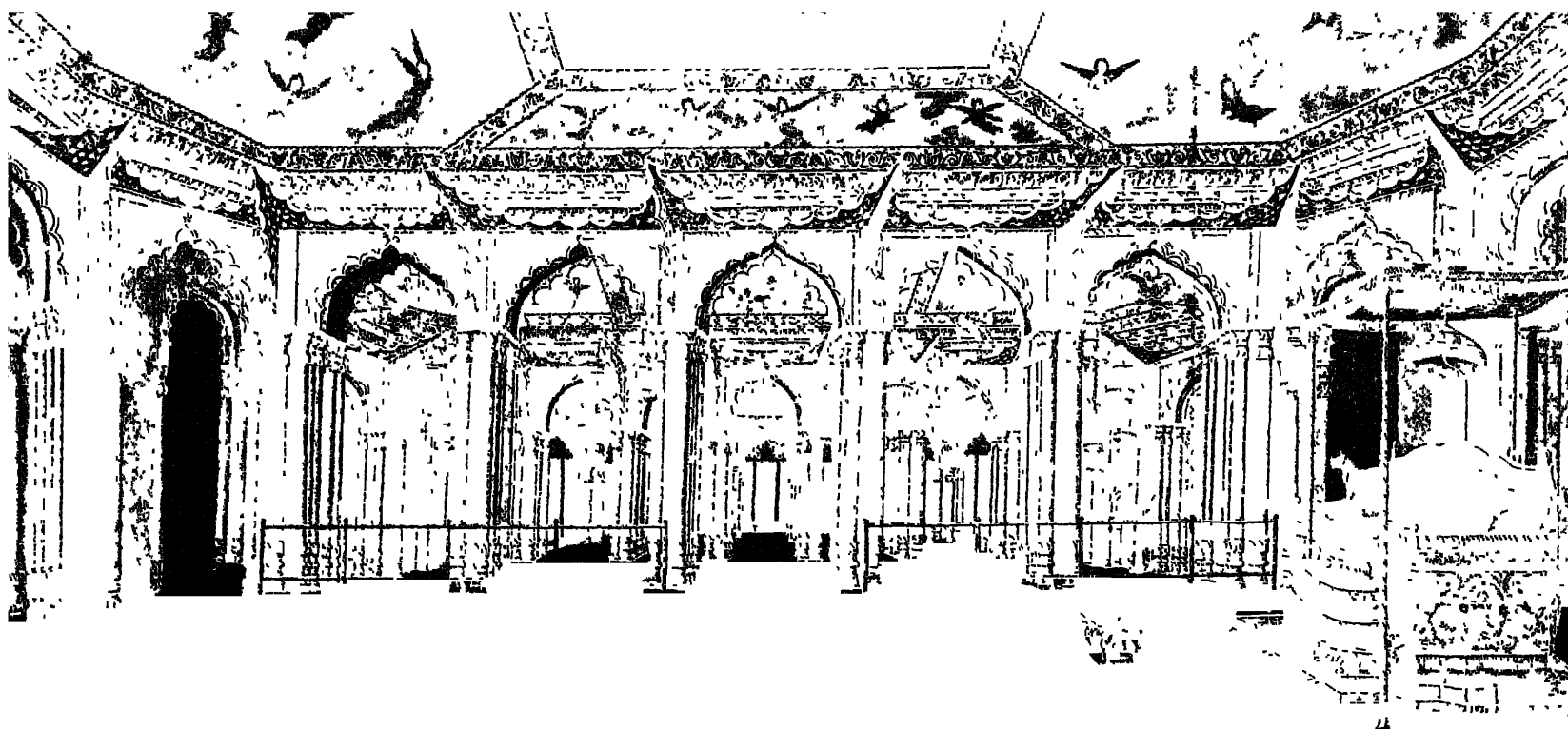
contemporary English manner of early Victorian painting and prints. While such paintings could of course be copies of, or versions based on English work, the influence is probably a more general one, from the work of Emily Eden in particular, whose *Portraits of the People and Princes of India* was published in 1844.

Typical of this Lucknow artist's style is the flat background, here of vernacular buildings and trees, while great care is taken with the spacing of the figures. A brahmin garlands the lowered colours, while another reads from the shastras or sacred texts; around him are sacrificial implements – flowers, pots, fire. This has been published as a ceremony of the presentation of colours, so that it would

14

The accession of Amjad Ali Shah, from Wajid Ali Shah's *Ishqnama*. By a Lucknow artist, 1849–50. 24 x 16 cm. Royal Library, Windsor Castle, RCIN 1005035, f. 41v By gracious permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.





15

The Throne Room in the Lal Barahdari, Chatrar Manzil. By a Lucknow artist, circa 1850. 31.5 x 65.6 cm. Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, MSS.941.2. Photograph courtesy of Nasser D. Khalili.

follow that such a ceremony would take place soon after the addition of the newest battle honour, in this case that of "Cabul 1842" which is embroidered on the colour beneath the wreath. New colours, however, have to be formally presented, and nobody here is actually doing so. The headgear worn by the sepoys, the round peakless caps known as Kilmarnocks, which became part of standard undress uniform for sepoys in the Bengal Army in 1847, suggests a later date for the painting. The British officer on the right is also in undress uniform, while a ceremony such as the presentation of new colours would surely demand full dress uniform for all. In fact the East India Company paid careful attention from the 1830s to Hindu religious ceremonies in its armies, so that rather than such a presentation ceremony, it is preferable to interpret this fascinating painting as representing the Hindu worship of weapons and standards. This must in fact be the *ayudha puja* undertaken on the ninth day of the Navratri festival, where soldiers everywhere look to their weapons and honour the victorious warrior Goddess. The 35th Regiment was based at

Allahabad 1845–47, and the painting was most probably done in late 1847, when this regiment accompanied the Governor-General Lord Hardinge to Lucknow to congratulate the new king on his accession, as shown in another painting by this artist, also in the British Library.

Lucknow artists were encouraged to work in a more traditional idiom in the reign of Wajid Ali Shah, who was indeed one of the most cultivated rulers of Lucknow. Famed as a poet and musician in his own right, he published various *masnavis* (narrative love poems) and *diwans* (collections of poems) under his poetical names of Sultan Alam and Akhtar. As a patron of art, he tried to revive the tradition of the illuminated manuscript. One of his most important works is his *Ishqnama*, a long poem in Urdu on his life and loves as a prince. The royal autograph copy of this work, which was finished in 1849–50, contains 103 full-page paintings, each of them dated to the event depicted. Figure 14 shows the accession of Amjad Ali Shah and investiture of the prince Wajid Ali Shah as heir-apparent, an event which took place in 1842. The scene is set in the royal audience hall, a vast room in the



Lal Barahdari part of the Chattar Manzil palace complex built by Nawab Saadat Ali Khan at the beginning of the century. Originally the darbar hall, this had become in 1819, following Nawab Ghazi-ud-din Haider's assumption of kingly status, the Throne Room and Coronation Hall. Here the new king had had Robert Home design and install a throne, which was a combination of a traditional royal seat or masnad with arched semicircular back, raised and approached by four steps, all underneath a royal chhattar (parasol) and shamiana (awning). We get a better idea of the Throne Room from figure 15, a side view showing especially the splendid ceiling with its depiction of the sky thronged with angels.

Lucknow then presents an interesting but mixed picture for its artistic development in the first half of the 19th century. Starting out with considerable promise from both its traditional style and from a newer, more naturalistic style, it ran into a severe patronage problem when the rulers of Awadh flirted so extravagantly with European styles. Overall, there is a sense of decline in standards, although of course much of court Lucknow work was destroyed in 1857–58. What has survived does improve dramatically in quality at the end of this period. As with any Indian court style, patronage is the prime factor, and the decline corresponds to the lack of interest in painting among Asaf-ud-daula's successors, a decline arrested by the accession of the highly gifted and artistic Wajid Ali Shah to the throne in 1847.

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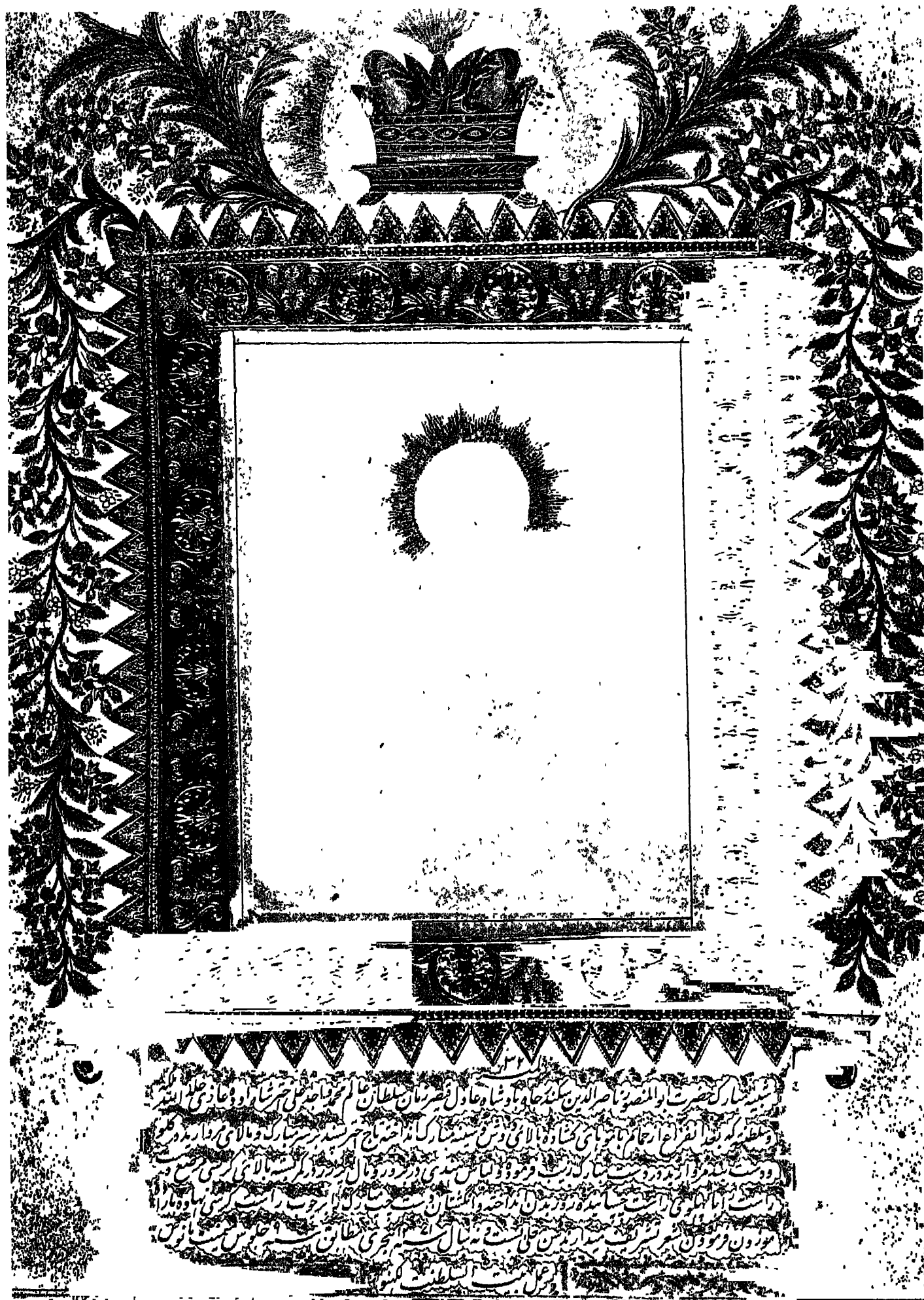
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# “A Silent Eloquence”: Photography in 19th-Century Lucknow

*Sophie Gordon*

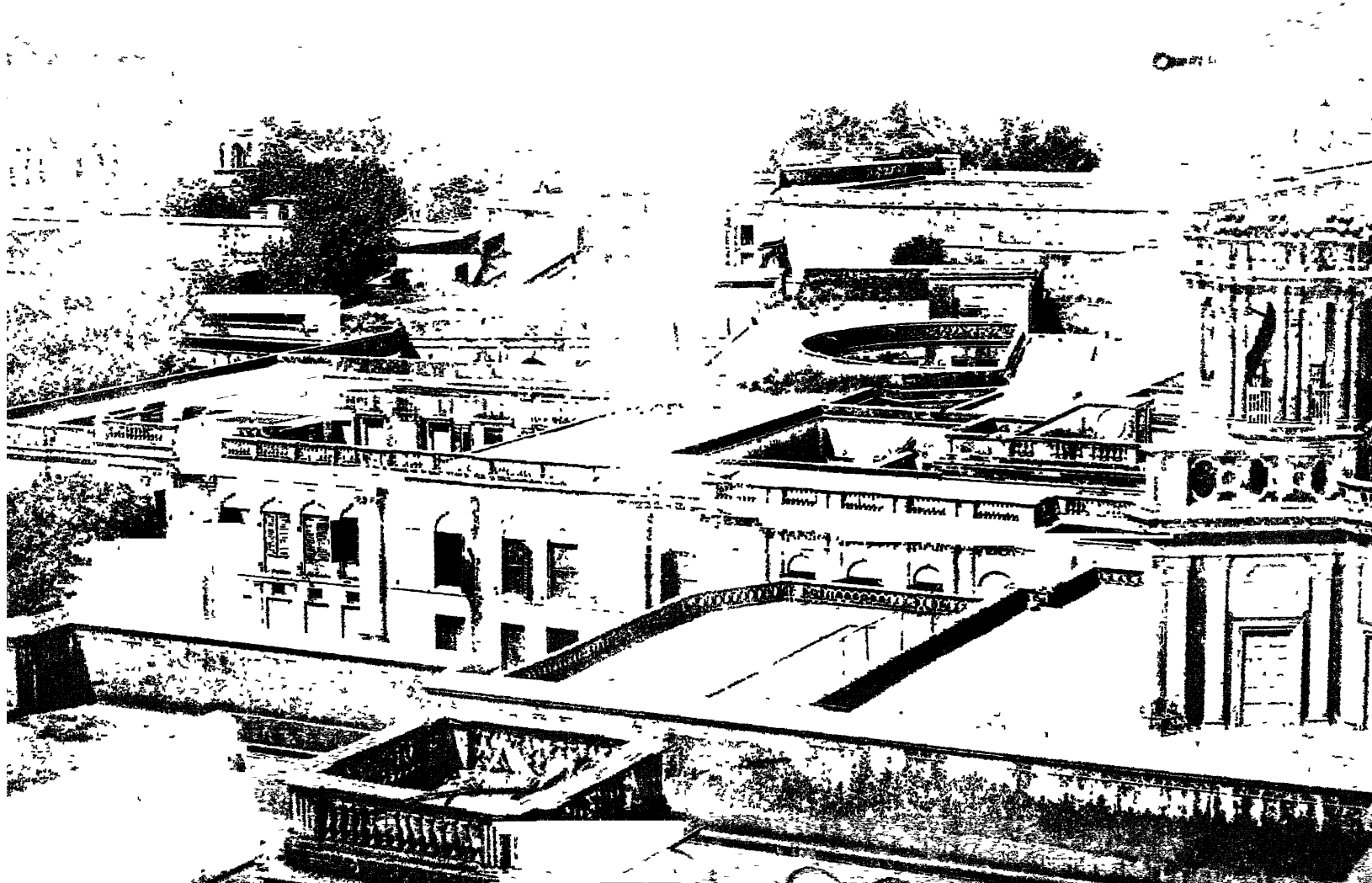
Local photography began to flourish from about 1850 when an Englishman of the military line came here. Chota Miya designer of the Hoseinabad and Kaiserbagh buildings acquired the art from him and practised it to great profit and pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

The camera arrived in Lucknow about ten years after the discovery of the medium, as described above by P.C. Mookherjee in 1883. Detailed descriptions of the daguerreotype process had appeared in the Bombay newspapers at the end of 1839<sup>2</sup> and there is evidence of photographic studios in Calcutta from 1844. A few photographic artists, usually amateur, worked in other areas of India during the 1840s, but it was not until the 1850s that photography began to flourish in India to any great extent. Lucknow was therefore one of the first cities to witness the appearance of this new medium. The relationship between the city and the camera was to be a potent and long-lasting one, as the dramatically changing landscape was recorded enthusiastically over the decades.

## The First Photographers of Lucknow

The earliest known photographs of Lucknow are in fact by a Frenchman, Baron Alexis de la Grange (1825–1917), who travelled in northern India between 1849–51. Only three views of Lucknow, consisting of the Asafi Masjid and a two-part panorama of the Rumi Darwaza and the area in its immediate vicinity, have survived in an album which is now owned by the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal.<sup>3</sup> The albumen prints made from paper negatives are grainy and unclear, but remain important as some of the earliest images ever made in India. Following in the footsteps of la Grange, “Chota Miyan”, who is more properly known as Ahmed Ali Khan, was the first Indian

<sup>1</sup> Portrait of Wajid Ali Shah. By Ahmed Ali Khan (Chota Miyan), circa 1855. OIOC Photo 500/(1).



2  
From the roof of the  
Chattar Manzil. By Ahmed  
Ali Khan, circa 1855.  
OIOC Photo 269/1/(31).

photographer to work in Lucknow. He was the daroga (superintendent) of the Hussainabad Imambara, the very complex he had designed in the late 1830s. Ahmed Ali Khan was a highly successful photographer, producing topographical views of Lucknow alongside numerous portraits of the British men and women who lived nearby in the military cantonment. Even Nawab Wajid Ali Shah sat for his portrait a number of times (figure 1), and allowed Khan to photograph the royal children and the ladies of the court.

In February 1858 members of the Bengal Photographic Society admired a group of photographs by Ahmed Ali Khan. The meeting was reported in the *Bengal Hurkaru*, where it was noted that

the photographs “were taken by the Darogah who has since gone over to the rebels”. Four years later some of his photographs were exhibited in the annual exhibition of the Bengal Photographic Society, an important event for the photographic community. Shortly after the exhibition, Khan was elected as a member of the society. His photographs are of the greatest importance, as they show Lucknow before the fighting in 1857–58 (figure 2) and provide a unique record of many of the inhabitants who were to lose their lives in the struggle.<sup>4</sup> Sadly, Khan is not known to have made any photographs of the Qaisarbagh – the palace complex – the design of which was perhaps his most extraordinary achievement.

### Felice Beato and the Events of 1857–58

The Italian-British photographer Felice Beato (1825 – circa 1907) was the first professional photographer to be drawn to Lucknow as a result of the bloody conflict of 1857–58. He had arrived in Calcutta in February 1858, and shortly afterwards he proceeded to Lucknow and there spent the months between April and August documenting the city. At the end of August a series of these views was displayed for sale at 37 Cossitollah Street, Calcutta.<sup>5</sup> Four years later the same series was exhibited in London, alongside Beato's photographs of the recent war in China.<sup>6</sup> The photographs were presented in a particular order that reflected the route taken by the British troops in March 1858. This became standard practice for the majority of photographers visiting

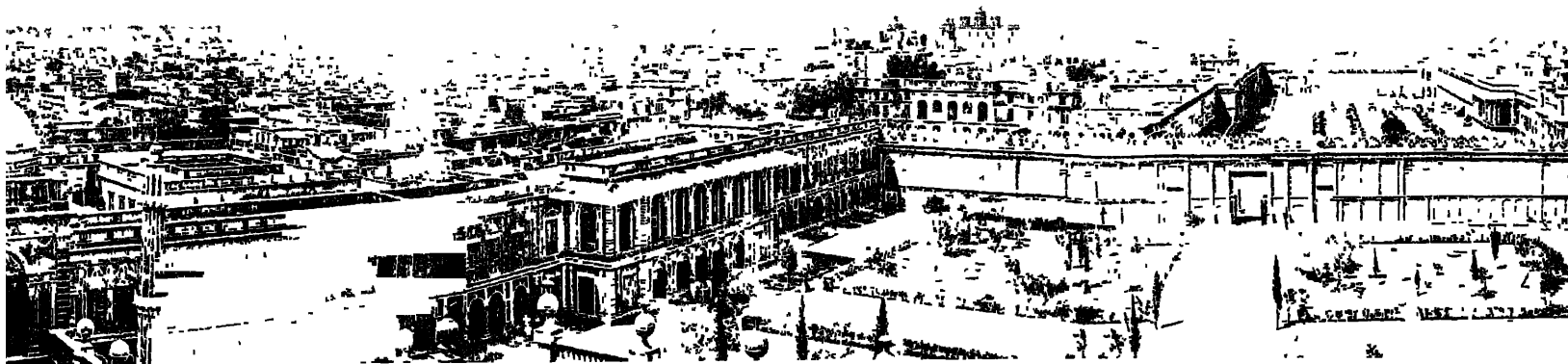
Lucknow and many 19th-century guidebooks also directed tourists along this route. The condition of the buildings in Beato's photographs, scarred from shell-fire, illustrates the severity of the fighting. Beato included a view of the Macchi Bhawan that shows the extent of the damage it suffered before its restoration at the end of 1858 (figure 3). The Macchi Bhawan was subsequently used as a military depot until it was destroyed in the late 1870s.

Beato also made two large and impressive panoramas of the city. One was taken from the roof of the Asafi Masjid; the other from the top of Roshan-ud-daula's kothi, looking out over the main courtyard of the Qaisarbagh (figure 4). In this view, we are offered a small glimpse of the extent of this great palace. The main courtyard still contains the

3  
Macchi Bhawan.  
By Felice Beato, 1858.  
OIOC Photo 25/(7)







4  
Panorama of the inner  
courtyard of Qaisarbagh.  
By Felice Beato, 1858.  
OIOC Photo 1087/3(3-6)

pavilions and follies which were sadly to disappear one by one during the following decades; the roads which today criss-cross the court had yet to be built.

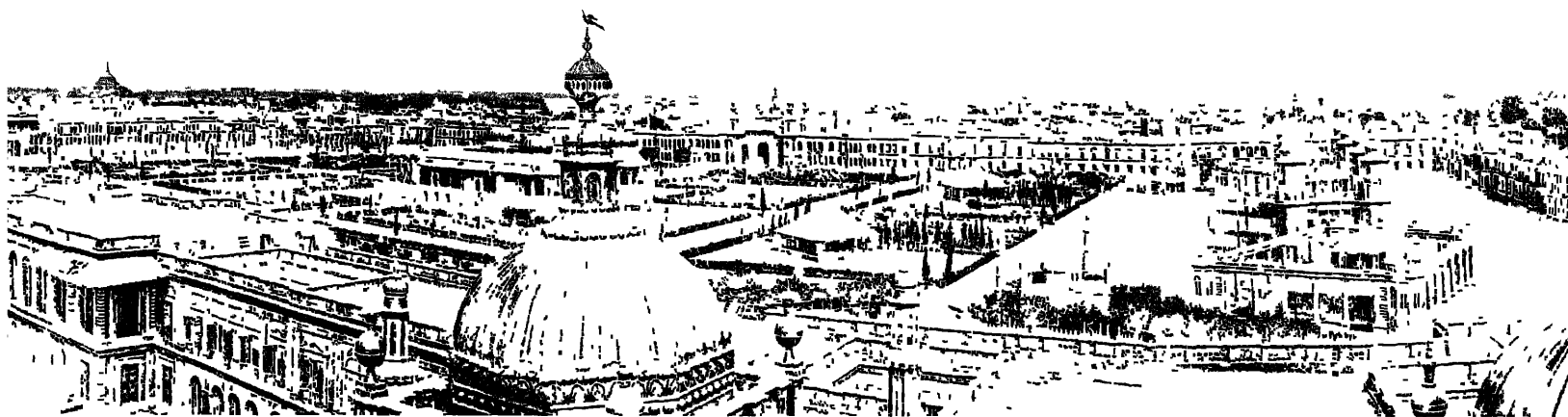
Aside from Beato, a handful of significant photographers were working in Lucknow in 1858–60 including the amateur Donald Horne MacFarlane (1830–1904)<sup>7</sup> and J.C.A. Dannenberg (d. 1905),<sup>8</sup> a professional photographer. Other photographers were military men, trained to use the camera in a semi-official capacity. In England, officers of the Royal Engineers were sometimes given tuition in photography whilst attending the engineering institution at Chatham. In 1857–58, a small series of photographs of Lucknow was made by Captain J. Milliken of the Royal Engineers. One of his views shows the Musa Bagh (also known as Barowen) built circa 1800 (figure 5). It has since endured many years of neglect, and has almost entirely crumbled away.

Another military photographer whose work is remarkably similar to that of Felice Beato is Reymond Hervey de Montmorency (1835–80) of the Bengal Staff Corps.<sup>9</sup> Montmorency arrived in Awadh in 1861 from China and made a number of architectural studies in Lucknow and Faizabad during the 1860s. He also photographed some of the tribes in the area. Examples of his work can be found in *The People of India* (London, 8 vols., 1868–75).

Beato also found time to give some advice to the husband and wife team Robert (1818–72) and Harriet Tytler (1827–1907) who took up photography together in 1858.<sup>10</sup> Within the space of six months, the Tytlers had produced around 500 views covering Delhi, Meerut, Mussoorie, and Kanpur, as well as Lucknow (figure 6). A selection of the photographs was exhibited at the Bengal Photographic Society in Calcutta where they were highly praised. A report of the meeting states,

Major Tytler exhibited a most interesting and valuable collection of Calotype negatives, forming perhaps the finest series that has ever been exhibited to the Society. Major Tytler took occasion to observe that he is quite a novice in Photography, having only been working at it about six months altogether.<sup>11</sup>

Other photographers from this period remain unknown, despite the high quality of their work. From a small group of anonymous photographs in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London that covers several cities in northern India, one unusual view of the Rumi Darwaza stands out. It shows the back of the gateway, seen from the entrance of the Asafi Imambara (figure 7) with temporary-looking structures blocking the outer arches. Later photographs show that, by the mid-1860s, these structures had been removed.



### A New Decade: The 1860s

In the 1860s, the number of photographers working in Lucknow increased. Many were commercial photographers who would visit the city for a few weeks, make around ten or fifteen views of the most popular sites and then leave, moving on to the next city on their itinerary. Other photographers set up permanent studios in Lucknow. The city was fast becoming an economically thriving centre, able to support a small number of professional photographers whose existence usually relied on the portraiture market.

One such professional photographer who based himself in Lucknow was John Edward Saché (1824–82, also known as Johann Edvard Zachert, born in Prussia).<sup>12</sup> Saché had arrived in Calcutta from America around 1865;<sup>13</sup> by 1867 he had a studio in Nainital and a few years later a studio in Lucknow. He lived in the city with his wife Annie and their two young sons, although Annie sadly died in November 1871. Saché excelled as both a landscape and an architectural photographer, producing views of all the major sites in the city. He photographed the Chattr Manzil complex shortly after it was restored in the late 1860s. All the buildings have been newly painted white, with the exception of the Lal Barahdari which remains red. A new hall, not seen in earlier photographs, has been added at the side of the Bara Chattr Manzil,

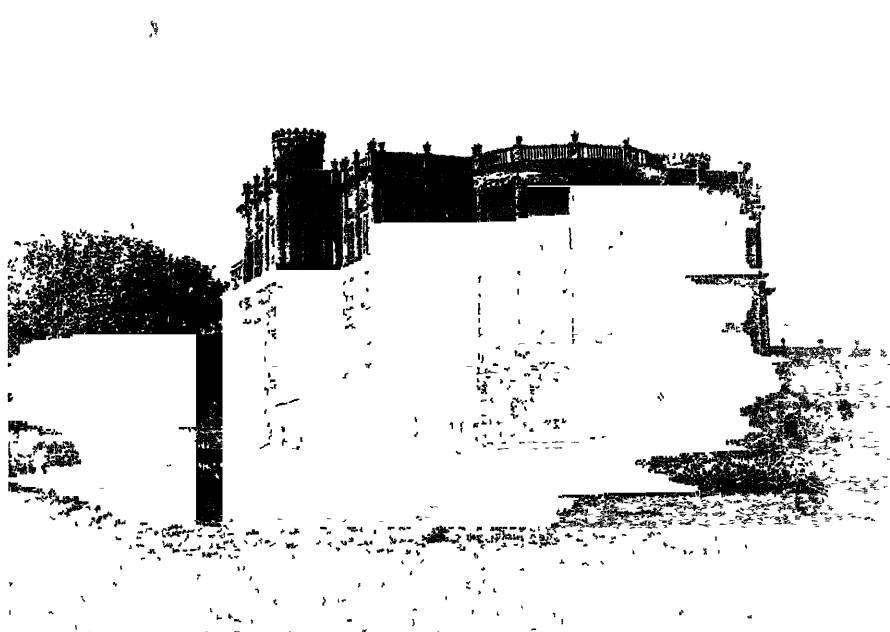
unbalancing the careful symmetry of the building.

Saché also recorded the collapsing Dilkusha (figure 8), a building which had been intact when photographed by Felice Beato only ten years earlier. The ruined house with its prominent broken columns was attractive to photographers, who actively sought out picturesque scenes that would appeal to their clients. This house, tinged with melancholy and carrying strong historical associations, would be photographed frequently as it gradually crumbled into the condition in which it stands today.

Amongst the professional photographers who visited Lucknow, the work of the partnership Shepherd & Robertson stands out for its technical and aesthetic qualities (figure 9). The

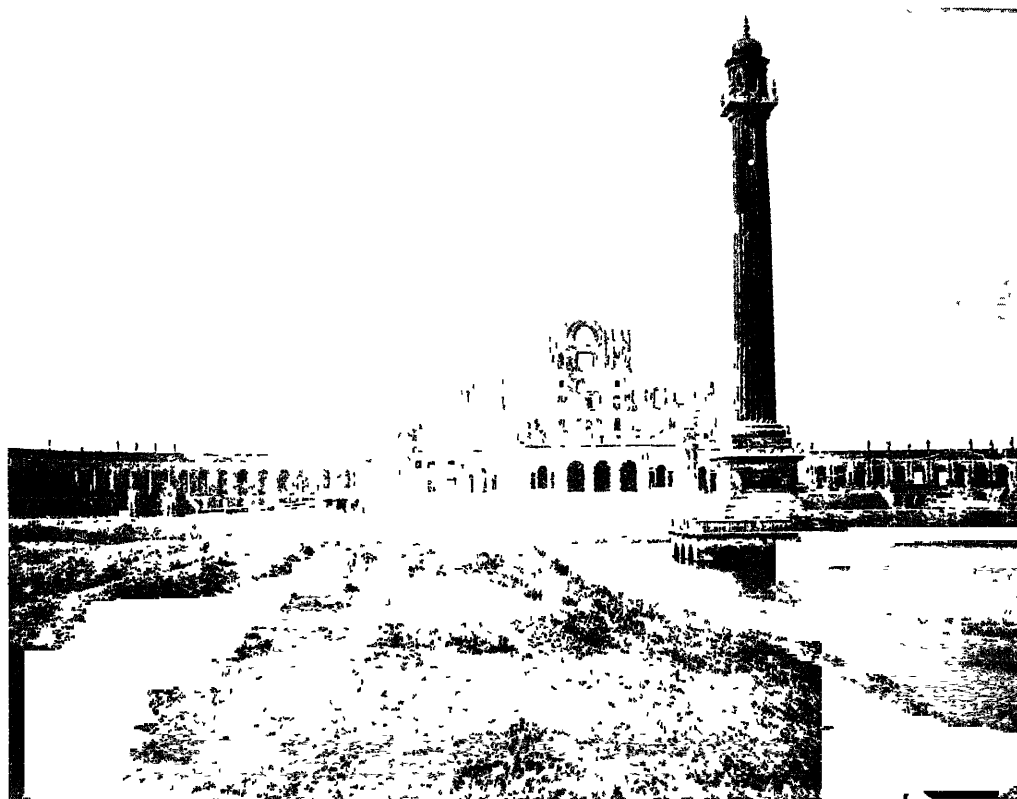
5

Musa Bagh. By Captain J. Milliken, 1857/58. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture, Montreal



6

La Martiniere. By Robert  
and Harriet Tytler, 1858.  
OIOC Photo 53/(38)



7

Rumi Darwaza, rear view  
Photographer unknown,  
circa 1856. Victoria and  
Albert Museum, London,  
2490-1900.



8

Dilkusha By John Edward  
Saché, circa 1867.  
Ref 198A. OIOC Photo  
2/3(145)



9

Hazratganj. By Shepherd &  
Robertson, circa 1862 Ref.  
353 OIOC Photo 460/(27).





**10**  
The Residency. By Samuel  
Bourne, late 1864 – early  
1865. Ref. 1028 OIOC  
Photo 94/2(41).

photographs themselves were taken circa 1862 by Charles Shepherd, who later became the business partner of Samuel Bourne (1834–1912). The Shepherd & Robertson photographs were subsequently incorporated into the Bourne & Shepherd inventory, although this did not stop Samuel Bourne making his own visit to Lucknow in December 1864. Bourne photographed in particular the Residency complex and its cemetery (figure 10). The ruins of the Residency building, especially the tower, had begun to take on an iconic status for the British. To them, the image represented the fortitude and bravery of the garrison that had been besieged within the Residency compound. Every photographer who visited Lucknow was almost duty-bound to photograph the tower and every tourist purchased a photograph to paste in their scrapbook on their return home to Britain.

Other photographers working at this time included Edmund David Lyon (1825–91), a retired British soldier turned professional photographer, and Mushkoor-ud-dowlah, who with his brother Asgar Jan, was “the most famous photographer of Lucknow and Oudh. His figures and views are excellent. He had an evenness of tone which common photographers cannot attain.”<sup>14</sup> Examples of Mushkoor-ud-dowlah’s work survive in an album in the Lucknow State Museum.

#### **The 1870s: Abbas Ali**

During the 1870s the most successful photographer to emerge in Lucknow was Daroga Abbas Ali, a municipal engineer. He produced two photographically illustrated books: *The Lucknow Album* (Calcutta, 1874) and *Illustrated Historical Album of the Rajas and Taluqdars of Oudh* (Allahabad, 1880). P.C. Mookherjee also

attributes to Abbas Ali a work entitled *The Beauties of Lucknow*, a series of 25 portraits of Lucknow's famous dancing girls.

Abbas Ali wrote a descriptive text to accompany *The Lucknow Album*. The volume was intended to function primarily as a guidebook for tourists and to this end, he covers the main sites from east to west, following the order established by Beato. The first plates in the book show the Alambagh, the Wilayati Bagh, and the Dilkusha; the final plates show the Dargah of Hazrat Abbas and the Kazmain. En route Abbas Ali covers sites that no longer exist, such as the Moti Mahal, once an important royal palace built for Ghazi-ud-din Haider (figure 11). Overall the book provides a valuable record of the changes in Lucknow since 1858–59.<sup>15</sup>

#### Lala Deen Dayal and Lawrie & Co.

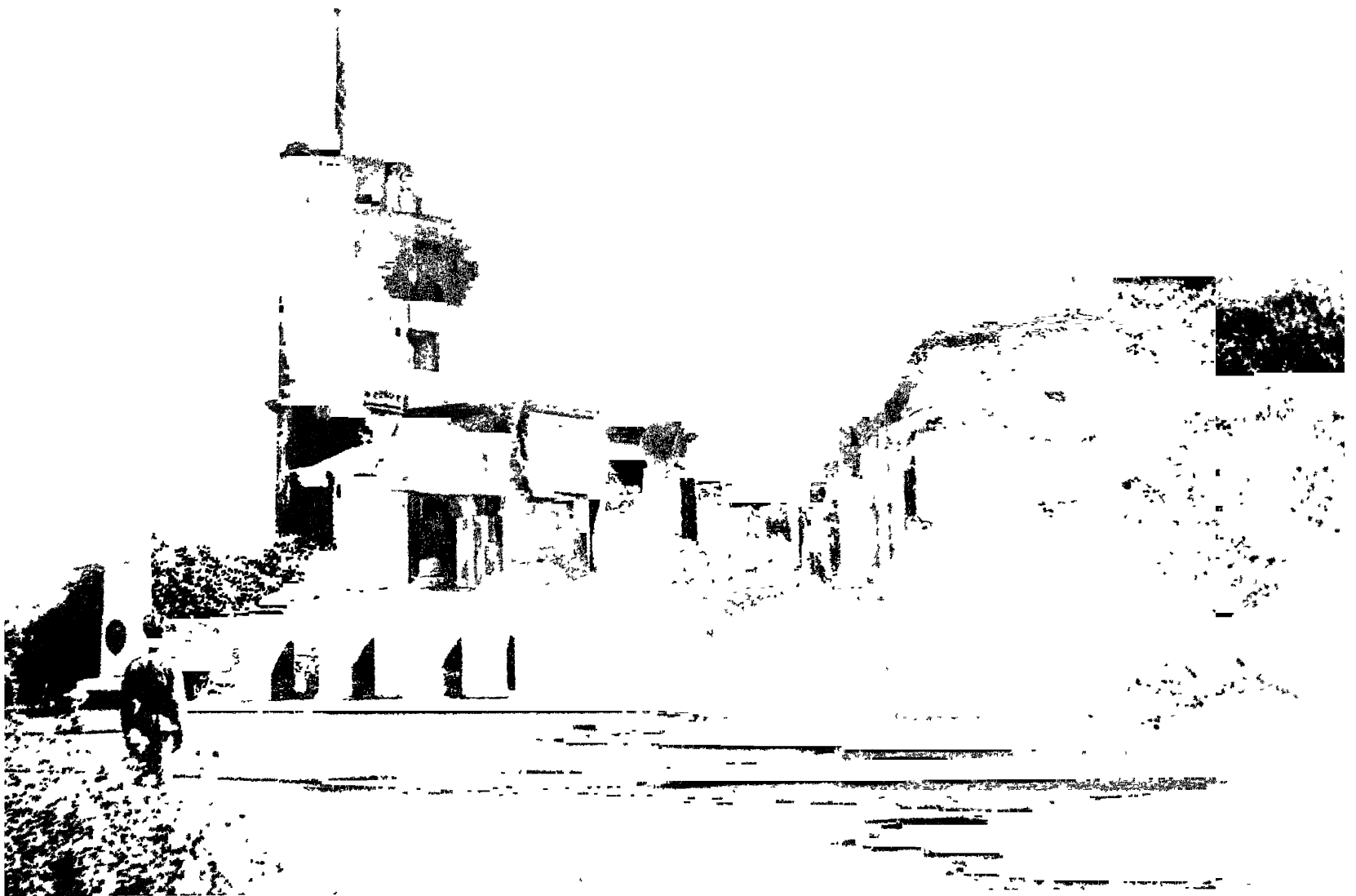
In the final decades of the 19th century, the work of two photographers stands out: Lala Deen Dayal (1844–1905/1910), the most successful 19th-century Indian photographer, and G.W. Lawrie, the founder of the highly successful commercial firm Lawrie & Co.

Deen Dayal, based in Hyderabad for most of his career, produced around forty views of Lucknow in the 1880s, covering all of the important historical sites. Deen Dayal also took the unusual step of photographing the model of the Residency that sat inside the ruins of the building itself.<sup>16</sup> It was a reconstruction of the compound as it had been before 1857. Deen Dayal (or perhaps a photographer working for his firm) returned to Lucknow in December 1899, following Lord Curzon on one of his first

11

Gateway to Moti Mahal.  
By Daroga Abbas Ali,  
1874 Plate 16 in *The  
Lucknow Album*. OIOC  
Photo 988/(16).





12

Lord and Lady Curzon on the Tower of the Residency. By Lala Deen Dayal, December 1899. OIOC Photo 430/17(95).

viceregal tours in India. Curzon, who had a strong interest in architectural history, visited many of the nawabi buildings, but of course did not omit a visit to the British Residency (figure 12).

G.W. Lawrie was established in Lucknow by the late 1880s. With another studio in Nainital,<sup>17</sup> Lawrie & Co. became the major commercial photographers in the city, operating until circa 1920. Their views catered largely for the tourist market, which still centred on views of the Residency complex. In later years Lawrie expanded his business, moving into book publishing, using his firm's photographs as illustrations. He also began producing postcards in the early years of the 20th century, responding to changes in the economic market as well as in technology. These changes meant that tourists were now more likely to have their own cameras with which to

take snapshots as they travelled around India. Many people, however, were happy to buy postcards in order to send greetings back to their loved ones.

### Conclusion

Today as the history of photography in India is gradually uncovered, the images produced in the 19th century take on multiple meanings, depending on who is looking at them. The same photographs can have value as historical documents and as works of art. Images of Lucknow contain evidence of buildings that have since disappeared, helping architectural historians to reconstruct the last phase of a great Mughal tradition. Other architectural studies, for example Saché's photograph of the Chattr Manzil complex, illustrate the combining of European and Indian architectural features. Yet this same photograph takes



on a further layer of meaning when it is viewed by a historian of the Great Rebellion, as the Chattar Manzil was the scene of fierce fighting.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, the majority of these photographs, even those that profess to be solely documentary, were invariably affected by the aesthetics of the day. The vision of the “picturesque” was such a strong one that most photographers were unaware that they were adapting their work in accordance with its “rules”.

The modern-day viewer needs to be cautious of these different narratives and interpretations that hide beneath the surface of these images. He must also be wary of assuming that the photographs reveal the past objectively and unemotionally. It is of course precisely this complex history, however, that drew so many talented photographers to Lucknow in the 19th century, fortuitously providing us with a record of this extraordinary city.

#### FIGURE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Figures 1–4, 6, 8–12 courtesy The British Library, London, Oriental and India Office Collections.

#### NOTES

1. P.C. Mookherjee, *Pictorial Lucknow*, Lucknow, 1883, p. 183. The title of this article is drawn from the introduction to Abbas Ali, *The Lucknow Album containing a series of Fifty Photographic Views of Lucknow*, Calcutta, 1874.
2. John Falconer, *A Shifting Focus Photography in India 1850–1900*, The British Library & The British Council, London, 1996. For details of early photography in Bombay, see Janet Dewan, “Sun Pictures from the City of Gold: Early Photography in Bombay”, in *Bombay to Mumbai Changing Perspectives*, eds. P. Rohatgi, P. Godrej, and R. Mehrotra, Marg Publications, Mumbai, 1997.
3. This album is discussed by Julia Ballerini, “Rites of Passage: A Frenchman’s Albums of British India” in M. A. Pelizzari, ed., *Traces of India Photography, Architecture and the Politics of Representation 1850–1900*, CCA, Montreal & Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, 2003.
4. Ahmed Ali Khan may have provided J.G. Farrell with the inspiration for the character of Hari, the son of the Maharaja, in his 1973 novel *The*

*Siege of Krishnapur*. Hari proclaims at one point that he is the only person in Krishnapur who can make daguerreotypes, and that all the British who want portraits have to come to him. See also John Fraser, “Some Pre-Mutiny Photograph Portraits”, *Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research*, No. 58, 1980, pp. 134–47.

5. J. Clark, J. Fraser, and C. Osman, “A revised chronology of Felice (Felix) Beato”, in J. Clark, *Japanese Exchanges in Art 1850s–1930s*, Power Publications, Sydney, 2001.
6. H. Hering, *A Magnificent Collection of Photographic Views and Panoramas taken by Signor F. Beato during the Indian Mutiny in 1857–58 and the Late War in China*, London, 1862.
7. J. Jane Ricketts, “Undiscovered amateur: MacFarlane and the Picturesque”, in V. Dehejia, *India through the Lens Photography 1840–1911*, Washington, 2000, pp. 149–55.
8. Dannenberg was one of the Europeans who sat for a portrait with Ahmed Ali Khan. British Library, OIOC Photo 269/1.
9. OIOC Photo 1000/(1344–1349).
10. “Major Tytler took occasion to express how much he was indebted for assistance to the kindness of Dr. Murray and M[onsieur] Beato”, *The Bengal Hurkaru and India Gazette*, March 31, 1859, p. 307.
11. *The Bengal Hurkaru and India Gazette*, March 31, 1859, p. 307.
12. Biographical information kindly provided by Mr Peter Grimshaw, a direct descendant of Saché.
13. Sepia International, *Re-Orientations: Photography from South Asia 1845–1920*, New York, 1999, p. 19.
14. Mookherjee, p. 183.
15. B.B. Sharma, “Darogha Ubbas Ali: an Unknown 19th Century Indian Photographer”, *History of Photography*, Vol. 7 No. 1, January 1983, pp. 63–68.
16. OIOC Photo 807/2(10).
17. There is evidence of a short-lived partnership in Nainital called “Saché and Lawrie”. This is not necessarily the same John Edward Saché who worked in Lucknow in the 1860s.
18. Different interpretations of the Lucknow landscape are discussed in A. Sinha, “Decadence, Mourning and Revolution: facets of the 19th century landscape of Lucknow, India”, *Landscape Research*, Vol. 21 No. 2, 1996, pp. 123–36.

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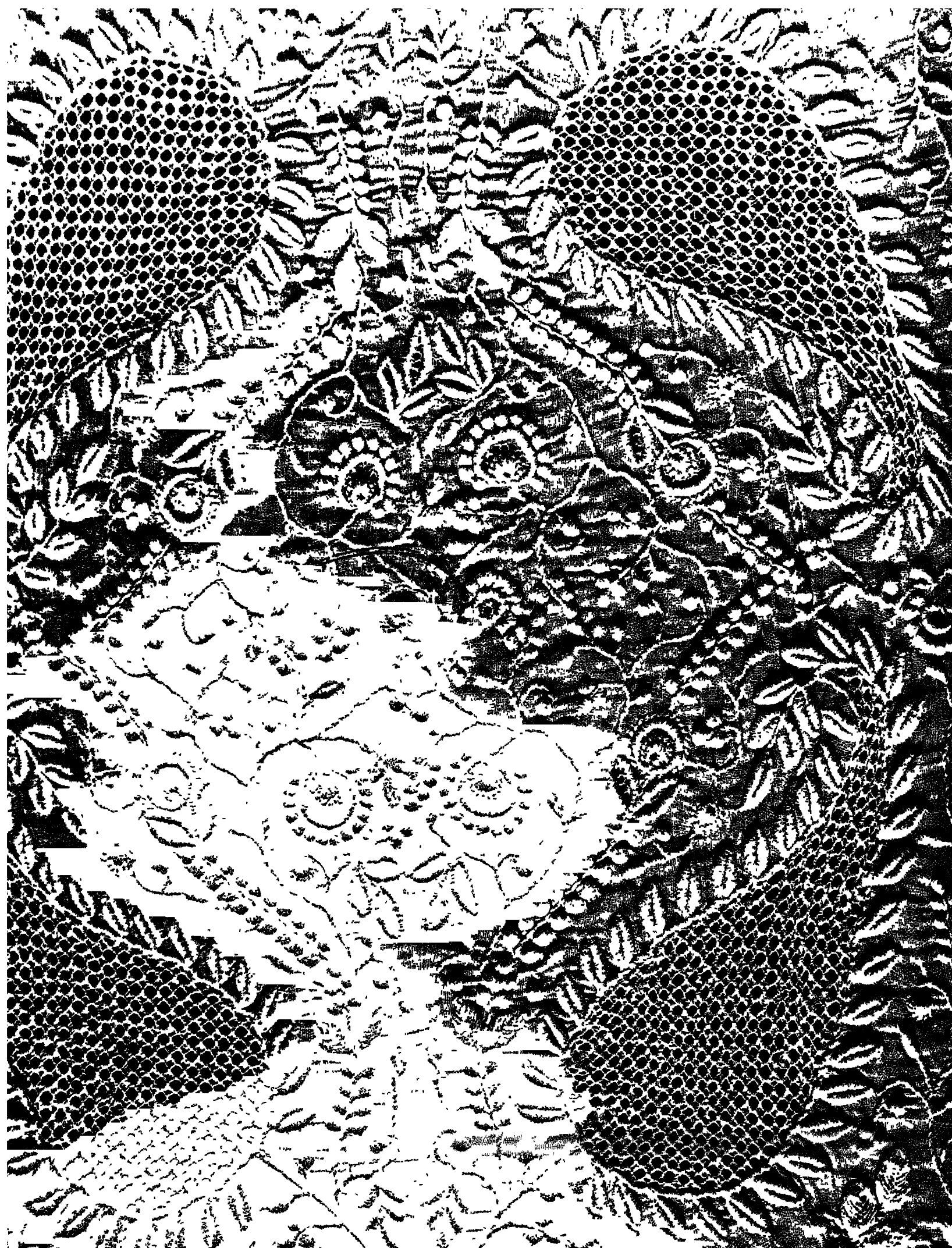
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